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SCIENCE FICTION
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THE ORIGINAL SCIENCE FICTION

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WAPSHOT'S DEMON

by Frederik Pohl





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NOTICE TAKEN



FOR A NUMBER of years now, leading science fictionists, both professional and amateur, have been contending that the medium has "matured" to the extent that it is worth the attention of serious literary critics. Now that some attention has been taken, however, I haven't seen any expressions of gratification upon the part of those who were pleading for it; quite the contrary. It would seem that what was really wanted was not serious examination, but merely a verdict of approval from some critic whose authority would give weight to that expression, and thus boost science fiction stocks among the literati—as well as give the fans a comebacker against people who disparaged their reading matter.

At this point, I am moved to prophecy: I predict that those who hope for the approval of some respected modern critic, which they can affix like a seal to the bindings of their various books and magazines, will not like further examinations of science fiction by mod-

ern critics any more than they liked the Siegfried Mandel-Peter Fingesten article, "The Myth of Science Fiction". (*Saturday Review*, August 27, 1955).

The modern critic's approach to literature is vastly different from that of the traditional critic, and these crucial differences result in types of illumination and explanation which are more often than not equally different. The method of the modern critic, to quote Stanley Edgar Hyman, * can be loosely described as "*the organized use of non-literary techniques and bodies of knowledge to obtain insights into literature.*", and he notes that the key word of the definition is "organized", inasmuch as traditional criticism did employ many, if not most, of the techniques and disciplines that the modern critic uses.

* "The Armed Vision", A Study in The Methods of Modern Literary Criticism. (Revised Edition, Abridged by Author) Vintage Books, New York 1955.

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Number 1

35¢

July, 1956

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COVER BY EMSH

Illustrations by Emsch, Freas, Luton and Orban

SCIENCE FICTION STORIES, July, 1956, published bi-monthly by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 241 Church Street, New York 13, New York. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Holyoke, Mass., under the act of March 3, 1879. Entire contents copyright 1956 by Columbia Publications, Inc. 35¢ per copy; yearly subscriptions \$2.10. Printed in the U. S. A.



*Sometimes there are questions
that one forgets to ask. And
sometimes, it doesn't make much
difference, anyway...*

WAPSHOT'S DEMON

by **FREDERIK POHL**
(author of "Slave Ship")

illustrated by **EMSH**

HE KEPT me waiting on a hard wooden bench for three-quarters of an hour before his secretary came wandering out, glanced casually at me, stopped to chat with the switchboard girl, drifted in my direction again, paused to straighten out the magazines on the waiting-room table, and finally came over to tell me that the Postal Inspector would see me now.

I was in no mood to be polite, but I was very good. I marched in, put my briefcase on his desk, and said, "Sir, I must protest this high-handed behavior. I assure you, I have no client whose activities would bring him in conflict in any way with the Post

Office Department. I said as much to one of your staff on the phone, after I received your letter ordering me to appear here, but they—"

He stood up, smiling amiably, and shook my hand before I could get it out of the way. "That's all right," he said cheerfully, "that's perfectly all right. We'll straighten it out right away. What did you say your name was?"

I told him my name and started to go on with what I had to say, but he wasn't listening. "Roger Barclay," he repeated, looking at a pile of folders on his desk. "Barclay, Barclay, Barclay. Oh, yes." He picked up one of the folders and opened it. "The Wapshot business."

THE FOLDER seemed to contain mostly large, bright-colored, flimsy-looking magazines entitled *Secret*, *Most Secret*, *Top Secret* and *Shush!* He opened one of them where a paper clip marked a place and handed it to me. There was a small ad circled in red crayon. "That's it," he said; "your boy Wapshot."

The ad was of no conceivable interest to me; I barely glanced at it—something about fortune-telling, it looked like, signed by some-

body named Cleon Wapshot, at an address in one of those little towns in Maine. I handed it back to the Postal Inspector. "I have already informed you that I have no client involved in difficulties with the Post Office Department; that is not my sort of practice at all. And I most certainly have no client named Cleon Wapshot."

That took some of the wind out of his sails. He looked at me suspiciously, took a scrawly piece of paper out of the folder and read it over, then looked at me suspiciously again. He handed over the piece of paper. "What about this, then?"

It was a penciled letter, addressed to the Postal Inspector in Eastport, Maine. It said:

Dear Sir:

Please send all further communications to my Attorney, Roger Barclay, Esq., of 404 Fifth Avenue, New York, and oblige.

Yours sincerely,
Cleon Wapshot

Naturally, that was a puzzle to me; but I finally convinced the Postal Inspector that I'd never heard of this Wapshot. You could see he thought there was something funny about the whole thing, and wasn't quite sure whether I had anything to do with it

or not. But after all, the Post Office Department is used to cranks; he finally let me go—and even apologized for taking my time—after I had assured him for the tenth time that I had nothing to do with Wapshot.

THAT SHOWS how wrong you can be. I hurried back to my office and went in through the private door down the hall. When I rang for Phoebe I had already put the affair out of my mind, as the sort of ridiculous time-waster that makes it so difficult to run a law office on schedule. Phoebe was bursting with messages. Frankel had called on the Harry's Hideaway lease, call him back; Mr. Zimmer had called three times, wouldn't leave a message; the process server had been unable to find the defendants in the Herlihy suit; one of the operatives from the Splendid Detective Agency was bringing in a confidential report at 3:30. "And there's a man to see you," she finished up. "He's been here over an hour; his name's, uh, Wapshot. Cleon Wapshot."

HE WAS a plump little man with a crew cut. Not very much like any Down-East lobsterman I ever had

imagined, but his voice was authentic of the area. I said: "Sir, you have caused me a great deal of embarrassment. What in heaven's name possessed you to give the Post Office my name?"

He blinked at me mildly. "You're my lawyer."

"Nonsense! My good man, there are some formalities to go through before—"

"Pshaw," he said, "here's your retainer, Mr. Barclay." He pushed a manila envelope toward me across the desk.

I said, "But I haven't taken your case—"

"You will."

"But the retainer—I scarcely know what the figure should be. I don't even know what law you br—what allegations were made."

"Oh, postal fraud, swindling, fortune-telling, that kind of thing," he said. "Nothing to it. How much you figure you ought to have just to get started?"

I sat back and looked him over. Fortune-telling! Postal fraud! But he had a round-faced honesty, you know, the kind of expression jurymen respect and trust. He didn't look rich and he didn't look poor; he wore a suit that was past retirement age, but the overcoat was new—brand-new, and not cheap. And, be-

sides, he had come right out and said what his business was; none of this fake air of "I don't *need* a lawyer, but if you want to pick up a couple bucks for saving me the trouble of writing a letter, you're on" that I see coming in to my office thirty times a week.

I said briskly: "Five hundred dollars for a starter, Mr. Wapshot."

He grinned and tapped the envelope. "Count 'er up," he said.

I STARED at him, but I did what he said. I dumped the contents of the manila envelope on my desk.

There was a thick packet of U.S. Postal Money Orders—a hundred and forty-one of them, according to a neatly penciled slip attached to them, made out variously to "*Cleon Wapshot*", "*Cleon Wopshatt*", "*C. Wapshut*" and a dozen other alternate forms, each neatly endorsed on the back by my new client, each in the amount of \$1.98.

There was a packet—not quite so thick—of checks, all colors and sizes; ninety-six of these, all the same amount of \$1.98.

There was a still thinner packet of one-dollar bills—thirty of them; and finally there were stamps amounting

to 74c. I took a pencil and added them up:

\$279.18

190.08

30.00

.74

\$500.00

Wapshot said anxiously, "That's all right, isn't it? I'm sorry about the stamps, but that's the way the orders come in and there's nothing I can do about it—I tried and tried to turn them in, but they won't give me but half the value for them in the post office, and that's not right. That's wasteful. You can use them around here, can't you?"

I said with an effort, "Sit down, Mr. Wapshot. Tell me what this is all about."

WELL, HE told me. But whether I understood or didn't understand, I can't exactly say. Parts of it made sense, and parts of it were obviously crazy.

But what it all came to was that, with five appointments and a heavy day's mail untouched, I found myself in a cab with this Cleon Wapshot, beetling across town to a little fleabag hotel on the West Side. I didn't think the elevator was going to make it, but I have to admit I was

wrong. It got us to the fifth floor, and Wapshot led the way down a hall where all the doors seemed to be ajar, and the guests peering impassively out at us. We went into a room with an unmade bed, a marble-topped bureau and a dripping shower in the pint-sized bath, a luggage rack, and—on the luggage rack, a washing machine.

Or, anyway, it looked like a washing machine.

Wapshot put his hand on it with simple pride. "My Semantic Polarizer," he explained.

I followed him into the room, holding my breath. There was a fine, greasy film of grit on the gadget—Wapshot had not been clever enough to close the window to the airshaft, which appeared to double as a garbage chute for the guests on the upper stories. Under the grit—as I say, a washing machine. One of the small light-housekeeping kinds: a drawn aluminum pail, a head with some sort of electric business inside. And a couple of things that didn't seem connected with washing clothes—two traps, one on either side of the pail. The traps were covered with wire mesh, and both of them were filled with white cards.

"THERE," SAID Wapshot, and picked one of the cards out of the nearest trap. It was a tiny snapshot, like the V-mail letters—photographically diminished—that soldiers overseas used to send. I read it without difficulty:

Dear Mr. Wapshot,

My Husband was always a good Husband to me, not counting the Drink, but when his Cousin moved in upstairs he cooled off to me. He is always buying her Candy and Flowers because he promised her Mother he would take care of her after the Mother, who was my Husband's Aunt, died. Her Television is always getting broken and he has to go up to fix it, sometimes until four o'clock in the Morning. Also, he never told me he had an Aunt until she moved in. I enclose \$1 Dollar and .98 Cents as it says in your ad. in SHUT UP!, please tell me, is she really his Cousin?

I looked up from the letter. Wapshot took it from me, glanced at it, shrugged. "I get a lot of that kind."

"Mr. Wapshot, are you confessing that you are telling fortunes by mail?"

"No!" He looked upset. "Didn't I make you understand? It hasn't got anything

to do with fortunes. Questions that have a 'yes' or 'no' answer, that's all—if I can give them a definite 'yes' or a definite 'no', I do it and keep the dollar ninety-eight. If I can't, I give back the money."

I stared at him, trying to tell if he was joking. He didn't look as though he were joking. In the airshaft something went whiz-pop; a fine spray of grit blew in off the windowsill.

Wapshot shook his head reproachfully. "Throwing their trash down again. Mr. Barclay, I've told the desk clerk a dozen times—"

"Forget the desk clerk! What's the difference between what you said and fortune-telling?"

HE TOOK a deep breath. "I swear, Mr. Barclay," he said sadly, "I don't think you *listen*. I went all through this in your office."

"Do it again."

He shrugged. "Well," he said, "you start with Clerk Maxwell. He was a man who discovered a lot of things, and one of the things he discovered he never knew about."

I yelled, "Now, how could he—"

"Just listen, Mr. Barclay. It was something that they call 'Maxwell's Demon'. You know what hot air is?"

I said, meaning it to hurt, "I'm learning."

"No, no, not that kind of hot air. I mean just plain hot air, the kind you might get out of a radiator. It's hot because the molecules in it are moving fast. Understand? Heat is *fast* molecules, cold is *slow* molecules. That's the only difference."

He was getting warmed up. "Now, ordinary air," he went on, "is a mixture of molecules at different speeds. Some move fast, some move slow; it's the *average* that gives you your temperature. What Clerk Maxwell said, and he said it kind of as a joke, you know—except a genius never really jokes, and never really makes a mistake; even the things he doesn't really mean sometimes turn out to be true— Anyway, what Clerk Maxwell said was, '*Wouldn't it be nice if we could train a little demon to stand in the window of a house? He could direct the fast-moving molecules inside, giving us heat, and direct the slow-moving ones into, say, the kitchen refrigerator—giving us cold.*' You follow me so far?"

I LAUGHED. "Ha-ha. But I'm not a fool, Mr. Wapshot, and I have had a certain amount of education. I am

aware that there is a law of entropy that—"

"Ha-ha," he interrupted. "Hold on for a minute, Mr. Barclay. I heard about the law of entropy, which says that high and low temperatures tend to merge and average out, instead of separating. I heard about it; you heard about it; and even Maxwell heard about it. But there was a German fellow name of Hilsch, and *he* didn't hear about it. Because what he did, Mr. Barclay, was to invent something called the 'Hilsch Tube', and all the Hilsch tube is is Maxwell's demon come to life. Honest. It really works. You blow into it—it's a kind of little pipe with a joint sticking out of it—the simplest looking little thing you ever saw—and hot air comes out of one end, cold air comes out of the other.

"Don't take my word for it," he said hurriedly, holding up his hand; "don't argue with me. After World War II, they brought back a couple of those things from Germany, and they're all over the country now. They work."

I said patiently, "Mr. Wapshot, what has this got to do with fortune-telling?"

HE SCOWLED. "It isn't fortune— Well, never

mind that. So we take my Semantic Polarizer. I put into it a large sample of particles—what we call a 'universe'.

These particles are micro-filmed copies of letters people have sent me, along with their checks for a dollar ninety-eight just as I told them to do in my ads. I run the Polarizer for a while, until the particles in the 'universe' are thoroughly randomized, and then I start tapping off the questions.

"The ones that come out at this end, the answer is 'yes'. The ones that come out at the other, 'no.' I have to admit," he confessed, a little embarrassed, "that I can only pull about sixty percent out before the results begin getting unreliable. The ones that come off slowly are evidently less highly charged than the ones that come off right away, and so there's a chance of error. But the ones that come off early, Mr. Barclay, they're for *sure*. After all," he demanded, "what else can they be but definite? Don't forget, the particles are exactly alike in nearly every respect—shape, color, weight, size texture, appearance, feel, everything—every respect but one. The *only* difference is, for some the answer is 'no'." for some the answer is 'yes'

I stood looking at him silently.

A bottle whizzed and splintered in the airshaft; we both ducked.

I said: "It works?"

"It works," he said solemnly.

"You've tried it out?"

He grinned—almost for the first time. "You took my case, didn't you? That was a 'yes'. Your price was five hundred? That was a 'yes'. It works. Mr. Barclay. As I see it, that ends the discussion.

AND SO it did, of course—permanently.

The Semantic Polarizer was remarkably easy to run. Wapshot took a nap after he showed me how, and I started feeding some questions into it—then, on a burst of inspiration, asked if Wapshot had put the same questions through. He hadn't, and that made sense.

Much later, I got hold of the white-haired bellboy, and sent him down for the Sunday papers. He looked at me as if I were some new kind of idiot. "Excuse me," he said, scratching his head, "but isn't today Wednes—?"

"I want the Sunday papers," I told him. "Here." Well, the five-dollar bill got the papers for me, but obviously he still thought I was crazy. He said: "Excuse me,

but did the gemmun in this room go out?"

"You mean Mr. Wapshot?" I asked him. "Yes. That's right. He went out. And now, if you will kindly do the same..."

I locked the door behind him. Oh, Wapshot had gone out, all right. I pulled the papers apart—they were a stack nearly a foot high—and crumpled them section by section; and when I had dumped them down the airshaft piece by piece, stared how I might, lean as far out as I would, I could see nothing at the bottom of the shaft but paper.

So much for Cleon Wapshot, gone early to join the immortals.

I checked the room over carefully. There was one small bloodspot on the floor, but in that room it hardly mattered. I pulled the leg of the chair over to cover it, put the Semantic Polarizer in its crate, turned off the light and rang for the elevator. The blasted thing weighed a ton, but I managed it.

The elevator starter at my office gave me a lot of trouble, but I finally got the thing into a freight elevator and—for another five bucks to the porter—in the private door to my office. Phoebe heard me moving around and

came trotting in with a face like cataclysm. "Mr. Barclay," she cried, "they're here! They've been waiting ever since you left with Mr. Wapshot."

"God rest him," I muttered. "Who are you talking about?"

"Why, the men from the Bar Association," she explained. It had completely slipped my mind.

I patted her hand. "There," I said; "show them in, my dear."

THE TWO men from the Bar Association came in like corpse-robbers. "Mr. Barclay," the fat one said. "speaking for the committee, we cannot accept your explanation that \$11,577.16 of the Hoskins Estate was expended for '*miscellany*'. Lacking a more detailed accounting, we have no choice but to—"

"I understand perfectly," I told him, bowing. "You wish me to pay back—to make up the deficit out of my own pocket."

He scowled at me. "Why—yes, that for a starter," he said sternly. "But there is also the matter of the Annie Sprayragen Trust Fund, where the item of \$9,754.08 for '*general expense*' has been challenged by—"

"That, too," I said. "Gentlemen, I shall pauperize myself to make good these sums; my

whole fortune will go to it, if necessary."

"Fortune!" squawked the short, thin one. "That's the trouble, Barclay! We've talked to your bank, and they say you haven't got two dimes to rub together!"

"Disbarment!" snarled the fat one. "That's why we're here, Barclay!"

It was time to make an end. I gave up the pretense of politeness. "Gentlemen," I said crisply, "I think not."

They stared. "Barclay," snapped the fat one, "bluff will get you—"

"There's no bluff," I walked over to my desk, patting the crate of the Semantic Polarizer on the way. I pretended to consult my calendar. "Be good enough to return on Monday next," I told them. "I shall have certified checks for the full amounts ready at that time."

The short, thin one said uncertainly: "Why should we let you stall?"

"What else can you do? The money's gone, gentlemen. If you want it back, be here on Monday. And now, good-day."

Phoebe appeared to show them out.

And I got down to work.

BUSY, BUSY, busy.
Phoebe was busier than

I, at that—after the first day. I spent the rest of that day printing out 'yes-or-no' question on little squares of paper microfilming them, and bouncing them through the hopper of the Semantic Polarizer. While the drum of the machine spun and bounced, I stood and gloated.

Wapshot's Demon! And all he could think to use it for had been a simple mail-order business—drudgery, instead of wealth beyond dreaming. With a brain that could create the Semantic Polarizer, he was unable to see beyond the cash value of a fortune-telling service. Well, it was an easy way to pay his bills, and obviously he wasn't interested in wealth.

But I, however, was.

And that was why I ran poor Phoebe ragged. To the bookmakers, to the bank; to the stockbrokers, to the track; to the numbers runners, back to the office. I loaned her my pigskin case, and when that wasn't big enough—the numbers bank for instance, paid off in fives and tens—she took a hundred dollars out of the bottom file drawer and bought a suitcase. Because it was, after all, simple enough to get rich in a hurry. Take a race at Aqueduct—there are eight horses entered, maybe. Write a slip

for each one: *Will—win the first at Aqueduct today?* Repeat for the second race, the third race, all the races to the end of the day; run them through the Polarizer, pick out the cards that come through the "yes" hopper—

And place your bets.

NUMBERS? You need thirty slips. *Will the first digit of the winning number be 1, 2, 3, 4—etc.* Ten slips for the first digit; ten for the second; ten for the third; pick out the three that come out "yes", put them together, and—

A bet on the numbers pays odds of 600 to one.

It took me thirty-six hours to work out the winners of the next three weeks' races, fights, ball games and tennis matches; the stock quotations of a hundred selected issues, and the numbers that would come up on the policy wheel. And, I say this, they were the happiest thirty-six hours of my life.

Of all my life.

It was a perfectly marvelous time, and it's too bad that it couldn't go on. I had everything ready: My suitcase of currency, my list of bets to place in the immediate future, my felt-lined wardrobe trunk for transporting the Polar-

izer, my anonymous letter to the manager of the late Cleon Wapshot's hotel, directing his attention to the airshaft—even my insulting note to the Committee on Disbarments of the Bar Association.

My passport was in order; my reservation by Air France to New Guinea was confirmed, and I was only waiting for Phoebe to come back with the tickets. I had time to kill.

And curiosity is a famed killer. Of cats. Of time. And of other things.

WHEN PHOEBE came back, she pounded on the door for nearly an hour, knowing I was there, knowing I would miss my plane, begging me to come out, to answer, to speak to her. But what was the use? I took my list of bets, and tore it in shreds. I took the Polarizer and smashed it to jangling bits. And then I waited.

Goodby, Wall Street; goodby, Kentucky Derby; goodby a million dollars a month. I wish I hadn't asked the Polarizer one certain question—which led to a series of questions. Wapshot forgot to ask and I remembered.

Now, say, it took a week to find the body, and another week, at most to put the finger on me. Figure two months for the trial, and sentence of execution a month or two after. Say it was real fast proceedings, and call it four months from date until they put me in the chair.

Not that anyone will; I remembered to ask those questions beforehand. No one will suspect me—why, I can't imagine now.

But I wish it were going to be the chair, even though that meant a longer wait. All the experts agree that the chair is painless.



NEXT TIME AROUND

Clifford D. Simak, whose "Spaceman's Van Gogh" brought forth your praise, now offers a short novelet, "Galactic Chest", for which Ed Emsh has painted a delightful cover. And we have an unusual article by Frederik Pohl entitled, "Count On Your Fingers", a lucid exposition of binominal computation.

When conformity is the measure of good in a society, then anyone who doesn't conform is unsane by the prevailing standards. And a machine which registered non-conformity patterns wouldn't tell whether an individual's pattern was right for him...

THE THIRD CITY

NOVELET

by BRYCE WALTON

(author of "By Earthlight")

illustrated by FREAS

HE COULDN'T remember his nightmares; he didn't even try. He only knew they were violent, and that when he woke up it was like part of a feverish explosion going off inside his head.

He rolled over in the damp bed and put his right hand on his wife's throat. Even in her sleep she was smiling. *If she keeps on smiling*, he thought, *if she keeps on smiling even after I try to tell her how things are, I'll kill her! I'll squeeze her neck until she has to stop smiling—*

"Flora," he whispered.

"Wake up. Wake up, Flora."

Her eyes popped open. bright blue and full of morning cheer. The smile widened slightly. Her hand moved automatically to the switch; and the television screen covering one entire wall of the bedroom lit up, and the Smiling Breakfast Lady's face ballooned out over the room. Lights snapped on.

"Good morning, happy citizen, good morning to you. We're one big happy family with work that we must do! We love to work, we love to play!



We love each other all the day, in every way!
For LOVE, LOVE LOVE is here to stayyyyyyyyyyy!"

He lunged over his wife's compliant body and jammed his fist into the switchboard. He swore and jerked his bleeding knuckles back, as the huge face flickered away with a screech.

"But honey," Flora whispered. "We've got to watch the Smiling Breakfast Lady! If—"

He slapped her. He drew his hand back, crouching there on his knees ready to slap her again. "Flora, I'm in trouble! Had bad dreams. Very bad dreams."

"But if you want to contribute your share to a general feeling of good-will, and acceptance at the office, then you ought to leave the Tevee—"

HE HEARD the smack, louder this time. Her smile widened a little, just a little more. He grabbed her shoulders and twisted her around. The tangled bedclothes fell halfway to the floor. She was beautiful, he thought vaguely, and the nude warmth of her seemed to radiate around him and fill him full of shame. Her firm little breasts like a girl's, and her slim arched throat.

"Don't smile, please," he begged; "listen to me. You can't smile at what I've got to say; you can't smile all the time at everything. What's happening to me isn't good; it isn't nice, it *isn't* all for the best. It's a helluva thing!"

"Bugsy," she said, and her smiling lips pouted a little and she moved her face forward to kiss him. He slapped her again. "Bugsy! I bet you're having one of those awful old spells of yours again. You phone up the clinic right now—"

He slapped her twice, fast, and her head banged against the headboard. A book entitled "Social Harmony And You" fell off the bookshelf to the floor.

"Stop grinning! Stop it!" He took hold of her face and squeezed it, trying to twist the smile off of it. "Phone the clinic! Hell, they already know what a jam I'm in; they know what I'm thinking before I do. I bawled Jackson out, I really ate him out at the office yesterday. I can't even go to work this morning—not like this! I'll have to explain why, and there isn't any logical reason. Just me. I'm flipping! I've tried to be happy, but it happens at night when I'm sleeping. It sneaks into my head. I wake up feeling as if I'm split in

fifty different pieces—and what do I get from you and that damn Breakfast Lady? A great big grin!"

"But honey, it'll be all right; you flipped before. It was all right. If you'd just smile, and think positive thoughts—"

This time when he slapped her, tears ran down her cheeks. But she was still smiling, and her wet eyes were full of optimism.

HE knew then that no matter what he did to her, she would be cheerful, smiling, and hopeful for the future. He remembered Joey's cremation last week. How Joey had looked lying there in his coffin during the services; how he'd been smiling, as though nothing out of the ordinary had ever happened; how cheerful he seemed about his future.

It was all right. There was nothing wrong with *them*. It was Leo Bondy who was nuts. He could kill her, and Flora would smile at him just the same as Joey did.

He backed away from Flora and the bed. "Honey," she called to him. "Leo—maybe you'd better call the clinic now. I wouldn't delay it the way you did that other time. Maybe this time you'll let them shock you a few times. Mary said she was so irri-

tated last week, and she went to the clinic and they gave her the shock needle—just a little, very light you know—and she came home just as happy as anything."

God, he thought, *oh God she doesn't understand at all. She really doesn't feel anything, not anything I feel.* Her love-making was technically perfect, she made just the right impression on people at parties, she scintillated on his arm. As long as he smiled, she was fine with him—but at times like this she was worse than a stranger. But then, he guessed, everybody would be worse than strangers when he was like this.

LEO RAN out of the left wing of the Communal Housing Center that sheltered all the workers at the Sunup Box Factory. He stood indecisively for a minute by the glassy-surfaced swimming pool. Palm trees stood motionless in the predawn chill; poinciana blossoms dripped crimson over the water's edge. Even the morning seemed to be opening its heart in a smile.

The memory of Diana Wynwood crawled into his mind, and wouldn't go away. He hadn't thought about her consciously for over five years. She had been a strange-

ly-quiet kind of woman tall and stronger-looking than was the custom for women. She had come into the Sunup Office one morning—not smiling. When someone expressed their uneasiness because of her lack of the correct 'office spirit', Diana had hit the office manageress over the head with a ledger and walked out.

No one had heard of Diana since. Now he realized that that had been the only real case of flipperiness he had ever had personal contact with—except his own.

Where was Diana now? What really happened to you if your brain waves started flickering the wrong way? When the old brain oscillation developed the socially-unacceptable rhythm, what then?

It was too early to take the heliobus. Nervously he started walking. Very soon now he knew, he would find out what then! They knew already he was flipping. He didn't have to tell anyone: they had ways of knowing.

That other time when he had flipped, that hadn't been nearly as bad as this. Then he had received some mild nerve-therapy under the lamps. That had been only two months ago, and he hadn't felt right since. He couldn't figure out when it

had really started, or why he had to be unhappy when everybody else he knew was happy.

Thinking of what had happened this morning with Flora, Leo walked faster away from the Apartments, along the winding pathway toward the chrome and glass glisten of the Sunup Box Factory. God—that business with Flora had been pretty horrible. He had never actually committed any violence like that before, though he had thought about it a few furtive times. Now he felt sick thinking about it.

He would never go back there and subject her to his own sickness again. He would either be cured, or not go back to Flora. But he didn't want to think about being cured, either; that scared him. He was scared now and his footsteps faltered as he approached the Communal Shopping Center.

HE PASSED the Communal Theatre. The feature playing there now was called "The Laughing Truck Driver." He hadn't seen that one yet; somehow, he didn't seem anxious about having missed it, either. He walked past the Communal Magi-wash, the hobby shop, the music store, the Share-a-Book

Library where people read to one another. It was more social that way. That didn't appeal particularly to Leo either; for some atavistic reason, he had always preferred reading a book all by himself—just another indication that he was an hereditary flippo.

Why? he groaned to himself, *why did it have to happen to me?* The Box Factory living section was out in the country surrounded by lovely hills, and green fields, and woods for hiking in in laughing groups. Beautifully designed and, of course, thoroughly self-sufficient. Any material thing that might contribute in the least little way to happiness was available at the flick of a button. Every pleasure convenient to desire.

Leo hated himself for not being happy enough in it not to flip like this.

The stores were opening but there weren't any people around. Too early for shoppers, and it was all self-service. Once, Leo knew, these places had been provided with clerks, people who waited on shoppers; but that must have been a long time back—at least a hundred years ago.

It would be kind of nice, Leo had thought once, to have some human personal connection between a buyer

and a piece of merchandise. He felt lonely much of the time—frightened by his own isolation. He couldn't talk with any one about these peculiarly deviant thoughts and attitudes.

Everything provided to make life a pleasant journey. And it *should* be pleasant, dammit! It is pleasant, all of it. It's just me, Leo Bondy. A really unpleasant flippo character.

He had always wanted to get out, run away from it, just take off in a cloud of rejection. But everyone had his place, everybody was happily active all the time at productive work.

He didn't want to think about those few excentions who tried to go against the grain.

All at once Leo froze up, stood there immobilized, and he could feel his heart pounding inordinately loud. Sweat ran down his neck and soaked his collar as he felt his knees stiffen, and his eyes staring at the Pattern Checker.

He had forgotten about it, blundered too close to it.

He could almost feel it probing into his head.

II

THE PATTERN checkers had replaced human authority a long

time back. They were beautifully designed and hardly noticeable, situated as they were as part of the decorative decor of whatever site they occupied.

At least once a day everybody walked past a Pattern Checker; it was impossible to avoid doing so. No one, of course, would ever think of avoiding one. If you were happy, and social, and cooperative, then there was no reason to avoid one.

But this little spire of thermionic sensitivity was only five feet now from Leo, and his bad brain oscillation had already registered; he knew that much. He wanted to run. but there was no place to run to. If there was a place to escape to, he didn't know about it; there were many things he didn't know. He only knew he was a flippo, and that he had flipped too far, and that soon they would take care of him.

Happiness, conformity, adjustment. It was easily and quickly checked now by the Pattern Checkers. Automatic analysers checking everyone who passed, testing each brain for any slight drop in the right kind of brain wave rhythm. Studying, measuring and recording frequency and amplitude.

A man was either nuts, or

he wasn't; and the Pattern Checkers never missed.

LEO STARTED running. He was a little over six feet tall, athletic, muscular and in good condition from having worked out regularly, as was the social custom, in the Communal Gym three times a week. He had run a quarter of a mile, fast, across the open field to the right of the Shopping Center. He had almost reached the river when he heard a whirring sound, and saw a sharp shadow jumping over the green grass toward him.

It hadn't taken long for the report of the Pattern Checker to run through the mill at Personology Center and come back at Leo in the form of a neat white little heliocar.

Leo stopped running. He stood there and looked at the river and whatever lay beyond it. More fields, more open spaces, forests. The wild unknown sprawling areas of nature with which Leo was utterly unfamiliar. The sun was coming up over there above the hills in a bright orange wash, and he realized somehow that that was the reason he had run in that direction. There wasn't any other reason; he had known that he wouldn't run far.

The weight on him was so heavy he could hardly turn

under it. When two smiling blonde women in white stepped out of the heliocar and walked toward him, Leo felt some of the weight going away with the desire to strike out at them; then the weight got even heavier than it had been before. He thought of Flora. He could hear the smacks of flesh striking at that perpetual smile. The fact that he had committed violence against another human being was a terrifying one, even to look back on. His impulse to repeat it now made him feel a renewed fear, a terror of himself and a kind of floundering guilt.

Almost meekly he walked between them back toward the heliocar. Their pretty smiling faces, their tender touch, struck him suddenly as horrible hypocrisy. "I've done something bad, pretty damn bad!" he yelled out. "So why take me in like this, smiling and being so nice about it?"

"Now, Mr. Bondy."

One of the women opened the heliocar door for him and then both of them helped him inside as though he were some kind of physical cripple. "We'll just pay a little visit to Doctor Steiner," the other one said as the heliocar lifted into the blue, and flew rapidly away from where the sun

was coming up. "He's very anxious to see you, Mr Bondy."

ONE OF the women put her arm over Leo's shoulder. Her firm breasts tightened against the sheer stuff of her white uniform. "Just relax, Mr. Bondy," she whispered in his ear; "you're going to be all right in a little while."

His chin fell on his chest. For a moment he wanted to cry—he felt so sad and frustrated about everything, and so ashamed of himself. Everyone and everything was so nice, even now. It made him feel like such a sad sad fellow, such an ungrateful jerk, a poor flippo who just couldn't appreciate being well off.

And then he felt the little tingles of rage that had ended up with a smack against Flora's face. He felt it seething inside, afraid to boil up the way it wanted to. *Dammit*, he thought. *The hell with them. The hell with them all. They won't give you chance to fight back against anything, that's the trouble. Hypocrites.* Taking a man in to do God knew what to him and smiling and rubbing against him, and moving their thighs against him as though it were a pleasure ride in-

stead of a one-way trip in a paddy-wagon!

All right, he thought and grinned thinly, if that's the way it is.

He twisted, and pressed the blonde back against the seat; he felt her red glycerined lips moving wetly under his lips and his hand dug into her waist.

"Please, Mr. Bondy," she whispered. He could feel her breathing coming faster according to schedule, and her body twisting a little under his pressure as though she were anxious about something. But he didn't really believe it any more. There had been too many times with Flora—always the same, always according to the book. But he pushed harder and felt the shuddering breath the blonde nurse took.

"Please—"

"Be nice, honey," Leo said as his lips moved down to her throat. "Remember, you've got to be nice."

"**YOU** MAY very well be an incorrigible," Dr. Steiner said.

In the white room with the desk suspended from the ceiling on silver wires, Dr. Steiner put his hands behind his tanned shaven head and squinted his pleasant paternal little brown eyes at Leo.

The nurses bowed out, one

of them straightening her uniform.

"So?" Leo shrugged. "I don't like it any better than you do, Doctor; it just happens, that's all. First I start feeling afraid of something, but I don't know what it is. The next thing I know I'm having bad dreams. Then I wake up feeling mad, but I don't know what I'm mad at; something just happens."

"I know. But at least you realize that the trouble is with you, Leo, and not with us."

"Sure I do," Leo said. He shifted in his pneumatic chair. The lights were so relaxing, he thought, the way they flickered over his face. "I know that. When I flipped before, you made that clear to me. Letting me go to Chicago and Milwaukee, then to New York and then down south to New Orleans and so forth. All the same. I come back here to Hollywood, and I know then that it's me. Everywhere I felt the same way. But then—none of those towns were any different, either. If I was the same, so were the places I went to; only the names are different. Everybody happy—everybody but me."

Doctor Steiner seemed very sympathetic. He nodded. "Your brain waves are just

off, that's all. We've got a complete record here, Leo, of the frequencies and amplitudes of the electrical changes in the different parts of your brain, sent in by the Pattern Checkers. There never was a really healthy controlled pattern coming from your brain onto the oscillograph; but it was enough to get by, and we hoped for a change toward a good steady conforming rhythm. Well, it's just never happened that way, Leo. You've got now what amounts to a persistent Delta rhythm. 0.5 cycles per second. Quite a drop from the normal Alpha of 8 to 13 cycles per second isn't it?"

"It sure is," Leo said.

ILEO WAS staring at the floor, trying to keep from breathing heavily, trying to grapple with and control whatever it was that seemed to be about to explode out through the top of his head.

"Leo, we keep the Communal Centers functioning smoothly, without irritation. When an irritation appears we smooth it over. When dysrhythmia shows up, we try to do our best for every one concerned."

"I know that," Leo said. "But why should this happen to me?"

"Just a reversion to a for-

mer standard of behavior, Leo, that's all. A somewhat more primitive level. Well, anyway, that's the way it's designated. I wouldn't necessarily call it a regression, or something more primitive; but then I don't agree with the way the system is set up, either. However, it seems the best of a number of methods so far devised to prevent crime, violence and general mayhem.

"Anyway, your kind of non-conformity is happening less and less frequently; Eventually it will disappear. Meanwhile, Leo, you're just different. Why? There are many reasons, and they're probably all interdependent. Some other dysrhythmic individual probably had something to do secretly with your education early in life. There are hereditary factors which we aren't as familiar with as we'd like to be. You're thirty years old, Leo, and when you were a boy there were a number of your kind around. They've probably unconsciously influenced your development."

"So what happens now?" Leo asked. "Can I be cured?"

"Cured?" Dr. Steiner seemed weary as he stood up. "Cure is hardly the word for it; you either fit in or you don't, Leo. Not cured.

Changed. Altered would be a better word than cured."

"Altered?"

"Yes," Doctor Steiner said. He seemed a bit sad standing there looking down at Leo. "Believe me, Leo, it isn't the way we prefer things to be. But hate got out of hand. If it hadn't been for atomic weapons, and the facilities for man's destroying himself completely, maybe it would be a less conformistic and a more individualistic setup. But this is the way it seems to have to be. So—you have to be changed to fit in to the way things are."

"And—and what does that mean? Changed? How?"

DOCTOR STEINER sat back down rather heavily. He looked out the window. "We can work on your brain and, in a little while, we can get the acceptable rhythm out of it. It's a very simple process really; we can use a flicker machine that can duplicate any brain-wave rhythm. We can condition the brain to give off any desired wave-length. The only thing is, Leo, the entire personality changes, too." The doctor swiveled his chair around but still hardly seemed to look directly into Leo's face. "In a real sense Leo, you wouldn't be the same person any more."

Leo tried to think about that. Finally he said through a badly-constricted throat "What do you *do* to a person?"

"There are various ways of working on it, depending on the individual and the circumstances. Shock treatment. Lobotomy, lobectomy, topectomy. Most of them involve a direct operation on the brain cells—"

Leo felt cold; something in his stomach turned completely over. He had a panicky desire to run—run anywhere at all, and just keep on running.

Dr. Steiner shook his head slowly at Leo. "Gets you doesn't it?"

Leo nodded heavily. He jerke^d his head toward the door.

"You're really different Leo. Usually when someone flips, he's still glad to be treated, changed, so he'll fit in. The fear of isolation from the social group is more frightening than the fear of losing individuality. Not so with you, is it? You find the fear of the loss of yourself even greater than the fear of being isolated from your family, your job, happy communion with your fellows?"

LEO TRIED to speak, say yes. Through the jargon, he caught significant mean-

ing. The Doctor was right, but so what?

"You'd rather be the way you are—no matter how flipped it's considered to be socially—than to be changed, isn't that right, Leo?"

"Yes." Leo heard the word fall out as though it had been hung up on the roof of his mouth.

"There is an alternative here, in your case," Doctor Steiner said. "We can send you away to another kind of social setup more to your liking. Or at least closer to your personality than this one."

"Where—"

"It doesn't have a name as far as I know. I've never been there, Leo; I don't know anything about what it's like there. We call it The Second City."

"Second City?"

"Not a very meaningful name, really. Every orthodox community you might call the First City. But the Second City is just one, a unique community which, over the years, a few deviant personalities such as yours have chosen to live in, rather than to be changed to conform to what is considered the orthodox communities. Now, Leo, you can go to the Second City if you want to; you have that much choice, anyway."

He knew fear, but with the

fear a vast release that seemed to flood Leo's body like a warm bath. There was a choice!

"You say you don't know what this—Second City's like, Doctor?"

Doctor Steiner nodded. "People sent there seldomly come back. It's completely isolated of course. Anarchistic. They make their own laws, live whatever way they want to live. A few have come back. Sometimes the Second City act something like shock therapy, and people come back to us with the right rhythm. Most of them never come back."

"I don't know what happens to them. The only control we have over the Second City is that any attempt to develop weapons more powerful than pre-atomic devices are suppressed. That's all; anything else goes there—and I don't know what goes there. I've been curious, but I've never attempted to find out."

"I want to find out," Leo said; "I'll take the Second City."

"All right, Leo." Doctor Steiner stood up. Leo stood up. They shook hands. As Leo went out, he saw Doctor Steiner turn slowly to look out the window, his shoulders slumped a little.

When someone later asked Leo if he wanted to see or talk with his wife, Flora,

once before going to the Second City, Leo declined the invitation.

He felt sad, thinking about it. All these years married to a smiling cipher, someone he had never really felt close to someone he could never have loved because she had never seemed real enough to love. When a woman smiled at everything all the time, what did the smile mean to you?

If it were passion, or pain, a laugh or a tear, Flora had always smiled just the same and said happily that it was all for the best.

In about ten minutes, it seemed later, Leo Bondy forgot all—or almost all—about the woman he had lived with for ten years.

III

LEO TRIED to get up; this time he couldn't even crawl. He collapsed and felt warm blood running down the side of his head. He felt wet pavement under his face. He opened his eyes wearily. Water gurgled down a gutter. Rain whispered in dark shadows.

He didn't know where he was; he didn't know where the Second City was located. He didn't know where he was located in the Second City. He only knew he was sick in it, and that he might very well die in it. Soon.

He remembered, once, when

he was a kid and had had a fight with another kid—and then that hazy episode right after, when the teacher had taken him into a room filled with bells and the bells had started ringing until Leo screamed with pain and fell on the floor.

He had never wanted to fight anybody after that.

Not until he had slapped Flora. But then he had known Flora wouldn't fight back.

They fought back in the Second City. And he was afraid.

He finally moved a little against the stiff pain of which he now seemed entirely composed. The effort failed. He kept hugging the wet pavement next to the brick wall. The rain was warm, almost sticky. He shivered; he felt like sobbing, but for some reason he resisted this impulse. He kept on lying there in the alley where he had fallen under kicks and blows too shocking in their calloused brutality to be really believable.

THE SECOND CITY was different, all right; it was a nightmare. It had a vague but frightening similarity to the places he had suffered in through his nightmares. Only he wasn't going to wake up out of the Second City.

A nightmare; a stinking

hulk, its air filled with germ-crawling dirt; its night bleeding sick-looking neon in sections; and huddling elsewhere in shadows and mazes and rickety buildings, poverty, starvation, crime, violence and horror.

He had been chased through it, lost in it, beaten up by it until he knew somehow that he was almost dead. In it he had been robbed of the credits with which he was supposed to have bought certain advantages. And any time now he was sure to die in it.

Now Leo didn't even particularly want to move any more. Lying there, he felt naked, vulnerable. He felt as though he were no one, was nowhere, with only a vague somewhat sad and hopeless memory of ever having been somewhere—and with no hope whatever of ever being any place in particular.

And yet, somewhere inside, he felt a little tinge of excitement. He was afraid of it—afraid of it taking over and sending him out to become somehow a part of all this.

Under him, the dark alley throbbed with beat of the place. Slow frightening pulses of sound. A growling grinding, a clamoring softened by its wetness to a thunderous whispering.

No place to go for help. The one Officer he had talked with had had no advice except a cynical laugh, and the words: "...you'll learn the hard way, buster. Or end up on a slab."

Pain throbbed through him. He thought of himself as a jelly-like mass, lost, more dead than alive, and alone. He lay there in a squelching pool of helplessness.

So this was the only alternative to having his brain cells burned until he turned into someone else?

He laughed a little, a kind of choking animal sound. He watched a piece of garbage drift away on a stream of water from a gutter pipe.

THEN, WHEN he moved his hand a little later, he touched something. He moved his head a little and looked at what he had touched: Two filmed eyes staring unblinkingly into his; a smashed face oozing small bubbles of blood.

The alley came alive. A black and white car plunged toward him. It screamed to a stop, and a light shattered over Leo's face. Hands jerked him up, propped him against the wall. The light angled slightly away and he could see the uniforms of Security Officers.

They didn't seem friendly at all.

They were big. One of them had a thin tight face, and the other had a bald head and no neck, and small eager eyes and a hanging jaw slightly bearded that shone wetly like soot.

They searched Leo. One of them held up a wallet, looked through it and whistled. Then he put his face close to Leo's. "Well, hell, Gehron." He turned toward the thin-faced officer. "We're in luck Sandy. The wallet says it's Gehron, all right; the tipoff was straight."

Sandy seemed hesitant about coming any nearer to Leo all at once. He said. "You Gehron?"

"Whose Gehron?"

"Come on, buster? You Gehron?"

"I'm Leo Bondy," Leo said carefully. His teeth didn't seem to fit together right.

"Here in your wallet, it says you're Gehron; and here's a work permit card from the parole officer—it says you're Gehron. You say you're not Gehron."

"I'm Leo Bondy—"

"You got any identification saying you're *not* Gehron? Saying you're Leo Bondy?"

"That's not my wallet," Leo whispered. He looked down at himself. "These aren't my clothes either. No the ones—"

THE OTHER officer said. "He even talks city talk good like Gehron can."

"Sure, this is Gehron. He's had his face changed a little, his fingers smudged. And if it ain't Gehron, we can make him do as Gehron. We were told to get Gehron, and by God this is Gehron. Right?"

"Right," the officer said. He went to the car, then came back with a small bright metal box covered with dials. It lit up. It started humming hungrily. "I'll get a confession out of him, then we'll take him in. A fast promotion for us, bringing in Gehron himself! No more chasing rats in cheap alleys for us!"

The light glared into Leo's eyes, filed at his brain.

"You killed Drakeson here—that right, Gehron?"

"Whose Drakeson? I'm not Gehron. I'm Leo—"

The hot light lens ground into Leo's nose. A scream bubbled up and he shut his mouth on it. "I'm Leo Bondy. I just got into this town yesterday. And after that—"

"Hell, we don't want the story of your life! Just say you're Gehron, and tell us how and why you killed Drakeson here!"

"No—I'm not—"

A club hit him somewhere in the side several times; sickness gurgled up toward Leo's teeth. He would have fallen,

but one of the officers held him up. The other one kept on hitting him.

He whispered faintly. "I'm Leo Bondy—"

His stomach jumped. Splinters of light danced through his eyeballs.

The alley was a tunnel dripping gloom. Leo peered up through it. It went nowhere of course. Nothing ever would go anywhere again. He seemed to slide around in a slippery darkness.

DIMLY LEO thought about how easily a man died here. These Officers were intent—for their own corrupt gain, solely—on making Leo say he was someone named Gehron.

All his life, Leo had tried to do what he was told, do what authority said was right. All his life he had been partly sick from having to do that. Now, he knew that they were going to beat him and beat him, until he again did what he was told.

But here, he knew, there was a vast difference. These fellows weren't smiling. He could strike back, he thought all at once, with a kind of frightened exhilaration; he could strike back without feeling guilty, without getting a smile and an outstretched hand in return.

Here he didn't have to do what he was told. He could do, or not do, anything he was capable of doing or not doing. But he couldn't stand too much pain; enough pain here would make him do something he didn't want to do. He didn't want to say he wasn't Leo Bondy—that he was, instead, someone else.

He had nothing against whomever Gehron was; but he didn't want to be any one else at all. He had left everything familiar—a world of wondrous, eternal happiness—just because he wanted to stay Leo Bondy, even if Leo Bondy was a disrhythmic jerk. And he was going to stay Leo Bondy.

He'd rather be Leo Bondy dead, he thought crazily, than any one else alive.

Maybe he didn't consciously think of all of that, but something gave him the will to resist the beating. He just didn't want to die, either. At the same time there was this conditioned horror of violence which seemed to split him into pieces, and he felt literally that he was breaking in two.

He had to get away from the officers. He had to get away. He didn't belong in the Second City either. He'd made a terrible mistake. Someone had made a mistake.

This wasn't right, either; this kind of living, this hell.

LEO LUNGED ahead. His eyes were down and his arms swung in panicky wildness. The light clubbed down, banged off his skull. He drove on ahead. One officer screamed as he fell. The light crashed out in the rain. Leo kept on running.

He was hardly conscious. He had no idea where he was, not to mention a destination. The idea was to run. Run faster. Get away from pain, the raw smell of violence, the sour smell of blood, the threat of death.

But he was in a maze, he knew, as he kept on running. In a maze, he would only run deeper into unless he could figure a sane logical way to get out. Some other way than blind running.

He heard the terrifying crack of the gun echoing down the alley. It seemed to burst beside his ear. A terrible weight slugged his left side, spung him wildly, disjointedly, along the wet wall. He saw the narrow alley opening falling away between the dark bulks of walls, and then, from somewhere, a woman's voice whispering: "This way, Leo. Ten more yards for dear old Sunup!"

He could see a woman's

shape, but the face was indistinct. He stumbled vaguely toward it. The voice seemed oddly familiar too, but that was ridiculous. He moved on weakly toward what seemed to be the last narrowing alley of his life.

IV

SHE WAS shaking him. "All right, Leo. Better wake up before your blood runs out."

This time the room stayed in focus. A sagging couch. A couple of delapidated chairs, and another door going into some other part of wherever Leo was. It wasn't dirty, but the room was in disrepair—poor, thin and shaky looking. Outside, rain washed time down a window hidden by a length of flowered cloth.

And there she was, not a figment of imagination at all, not part of an awkward memory either. There she was, real and resoundingly alive.

Diana Wynwood.

Almost the same, he thought, except more of the same. The things that had made her so different from any other woman were just much more developed now. Taller, stronger looking, but very feminine too, he remembered. But it was real.

And she wasn't smiling, either.

She leaned against the yellow, spotted wall and looked down at him. There was a hardness and a softness in her eyes. A hesitant sympathy yet a callousness in the touch of her hand on his bruised and split face.

"Diana," he whispered. "Diana Wynwood."

"Leo Bondy," she said. "I wondered when you'd get tired of sticking boxes together."

She was like a lithe animal leaning there, he thought. She had high cheekbones, and full flaring nostrils; her mouth was wide and sensuous. She wore her hair close to her head in a style Leo had never seen before. It gave her a kind of dignity that made the animal-like vitality of her even more striking.

She wore a tight brown skirt and thin blouse that moulded every line of her body. But her beauty was something elsewhere, he thought. It came out of her eyes her face, all of her—the scars, blows, and all the resultant feelings that come from many different kinds of experience. It was a strange alien look; he had never seen it before but he had imagined how it would look. He recognized it now.

"Just keep looking, Leo, if it makes you feel any better."

"Thanks," Leo said. "It does make me feel better."

"But it took you a long enough time to get here to take another look, Leo."

"I know. Now I'm sorry I stopped putting boxes together. I'm glad to see you again Diana; very glad. But I've made a mistake."

"Maybe."

SHE DAMPENED a cloth under a faucet in a cracked bowl leaning precariously from the side of the wall. She moved with a long-legged easy grace.

"First, Leo, we've got to fix you up a little, and get you out of here." With an utter lack of inhibition she lifted her skirt above her knees so she was free to kneel beside him. Excitement drowned the pain and the aches in him. Now he knew what it *should* be like; now he knew the difference between the real thing, and whatever they had made out of human emotion back there somewhere in the Community Projects. He could feel his own hunger activated, reaching out, tingling reacting, coming alive all over him inside and out.

And he was afraid of it.

She looked at his swelling arm from which the sleeve of his shirt had been ripped, and then she puckered her lips.

"They clobbered you good; it's torn up plenty."

Then she smiled a little, but there was sadness in it, too. It was a real smile. He had never seen one before.

He gripped her wrist with his right hand and she sank down against him. He didn't feel any pain. All he felt was the tingling excitement of her touch, and the aliveness in him that he had never felt before.

"Diana— I remembered you, plenty of times after you left. I didn't know where you had gone. I—I'm glad to see you."

"And I'm glad to see you too, Leo. I never thought you had ever noticed me there in the offices of dear old Sun-up."

"I did, but I didn't know why. I was afraid of what I felt, Diana."

She nodded. "The only thing I hated to leave at Sun-up was Leo Bondy. You know why I finally blew my stack for good that morning, Leo? I'll tell you. That was the morning I found out you had married Flora Roberts."

"I just did it," Leo said. "It was the thing to do. Now I realize I didn't really want to marry Flora."

"I know." She touched his face tenderly. "You always had something I liked, Leo. I

always knew you were like me, but I didn't know that you would ever really flip. Anyway, I thought you might. And I was sure that if you did flip, you'd choose the Second City; I've been waiting for you, Leo."

"Is that how you knew I was there in the alley?"

SHE NODDED. "I had a man at the checking station watching out for the name Leo Bondy. He called me and told me when you were getting in. I was there to meet you, but I barely missed you; after that, I had a tough time keeping track of you."

"How did you?"

"I—I have connections in this place," she said slowly, almost inaudibly. There was a sadness in her voice too, a little of it there all the time. She looked away from him toward the window and the rain. She slid back on her knees and her hands were flat on the floor. "I didn't know from nothing when I first got here; nobody does. I got in with a bunch of crooks. It's hard to avoid that in this town, even if you know what it's all about. I knew Gehron and a lot of those people. I knew some other people, too; I found out what they were cooking up for you."

"Gehron—?"

"He just got out of the hammer a week ago. Paroled. I—I knew him well once—too well, I guess. He came here a few hours ago to get me. He said he'd kill me for running out on him. I wouldn't let him in, and he started to break in. The cops showed and ran him off. But I found out about how they'd set you up in the alley. That's why I was here. I made it easy for him to find out I was here, and meanwhile I was finding out about you, too.

"I found out they had killed Drakeson—or rather, that Gehron had had him murdered. Something Drakeson did while Gehron was in the hammer. I found out how they were going to stake you out as Gehron to take the rap for murdering Drakeson. So I went over there. The whole thing is just to give Gehron a little more time."

"Everybody want to kill everybody else here?"

"NOT EVERYBODY; but the place runs on hate. Hate is the fuel. It's a rough go all the way just the same here. Whatever you gain, someone else has to pay off. You never know you'll be hungry, out of a job, without a place to sleep, or when you're going to lose your lover, or

get the wrong one. You have to decide everything for yourself here if you can, and a person can make a lot of mistakes. This place is nothing like our happy little Community was, Leo."

"I know that!"

"Nothing's secure, you fight every minute just to keep on living."

"I want to get out of here," Leo said. "I don't belong here; it was a helluva mistake that's all!"

"Leo, Gehron may be back. Something's blocking him from getting another pass into another section of town where he'd be safer. As long as he's here he'll be after me; he'll be after you, too. The cops are also after you. Gehron's got you set up as himself; so it would be to his advantage to kill you—that would keep the cops off him for a while. But right now we've got to keep you alive."

"I just want to get out of here," Leo whispered.

"Is that really all you want?" she asked softly.

"It was a mistake," he said. "If I could get back to that Worker's Paradise I'll bet my brain wave pattern would be a perfect fit!"

Slowly she stood up. A shadow lengthened her face. She sounded tired. He thought, "Maybe I was wrong

about you, Leo; maybe you really *would* like it better there—even if you weren't you any more. Even if you were just a damn smiling tool doing something a robot could do better."

A scream faded toward them through the night. "Sirens," she said. She stood very still as though she had stopped breathing. "Cops all over the place. They're sure going to get you, Leo, if they can."

"They don't need cops in our happy Community at Sunup," Leo said.

She grinned without humor. "That's right. Back there in the Sunup paradise, they have Pattern Checkers instead. Sweet neat little brain probers everywhere. The cops are bad, Leo; but they're human. You can deal with a human; you can even fight back at a human if you want to. Sure A cop can hit you over the head. But at least what's inside my head, I can keep to myself."

LEO MANAGED to stand up. He leaned against the wall. He looked down at his hanging arm throbbing blood out onto his fingers and onto the floor. Sickness soured in his throat. He had never seen but a little bit of blood before.

But even then he could feel

the vitality, the genuine aliveness of this woman filling the room. If she were in his arms in the dark the way Flora had been so many times, she would be awake. Not asleep but smiling—the way Flora had always really been.

Pain pushed at the backs of Leo's eyes.

"You handled those two cops awfully well, Leo, for an amateur. Some things some kinds of people don't have to learn to do."

He didn't say anything.

She touched his face softly. "Feeling a little better now?"

"A little." Suddenly he covered his face with his hands and bent down. Feeling burned up like stretching hot wires through him; he felt her hands soothing on his hair.

"God," he whispered, "I don't know how I feel. Back there, I knew at least that I wasn't happy. I knew I was supposed to be. Here—you don't *know* anything." His words sounded heavy and senseless; his body throbbed. Inside his head were only muddy clouds of confusion and fear. Here he was part of no plan, part of nothing except murderous chaos.

"Freedom is hard to take," Diana said; "and this is a kind of dirty freedom. I can imagine cleaner, better kinds

of freedom—but this is one kind. You had complete security and it drove you nuts because it kept a lid on your freedom. Now you have a kind of freedom, and you want to run back to what drove you nuts. But it wouldn't work, Leo; you go back there and you'll flip again."

She paused, and then added. "You won't get a chance to come back here again, Leo."

He shook his head back and forth, his body swaying like a tormented beast in the *cul-de-sac*.

"This place doesn't take the courage out of you, Leo; but the sweet little Community did. Here you have to keep growing and fighting somehow, or you die."

BEHIND the curtain of his sweating hands, Leo felt something really dangerous, he thought, building up in the darkness.

"It takes real courage to live here, Leo."

"But I don't want to die."

"That's a good sign already."

"Why?"

"Because back there at Sun-up you never were really alive much; so death didn't matter very much, either. Did it?"

After a while, he said, "If I could just get my brain clear a little—I could maybe figure

something out. Maybe I could figure out a way to get back into that Community. *I want to go back, Diana!*"

She shrugged, and her face seemed to harden. "I know of ways you can get back. It isn't hard; it's easy in fact."

He yelled. "I want to get back!"

"You liked it so much, Leo. Why did you go nuts back there? Why did you want out?"

He lunged for the door and jerked it open. He felt the cool strange breath of the rain over his sweating skin. She cried out then and swayed toward him. He heard this odd lonely tone in her voice. "Leo—don't try to go back. Please—we've got to get that arm fixed up. We've got to take that bullet out, get that arm bandaged—"

"Goodby, Diana," he said. "I appreciate what you've done; but—this isn't right either, this place. Violence, hate, death—that isn't the way, either. Now I can understand what Steiner really was saying. To stamp out the worst kinds of violence and hate, you have to kill all of it—"

She started to laugh; then she dropped onto the squeaking bed and turned her face away.

V

THE WIND, full of blowing wet, kicked at his hair as he covered one block, then two, shying from alleyways and running across the street if he saw any one on his side.

Sometimes a human form appeared, then melted again as though part of the streaming night. The wet pavement was scummed with pools in the light of sick streetlights.

Leo thought of the bright clean Community of Sunup. He felt blood running out of his arm; but he could lose a lot of blood, he guessed—although he couldn't afford to waste much time.

He was sure, now, that if he could get back to that warm California workers' community at Sunup, he would be able to fit in, adjust, have the right brain rhythm. He was sure that this place had shocked him back to the most agreeable kind of conformity. But how—how to get back?

There must be some agency here to check your brain waves, find out if you were eligible to go back to the happy people. There weren't any Pattern Checkers here.

But how could you be sure here whether your brain wave was right or not? Where could he find out about him-

self? There must be someplace he could find out about himself.

A man weaved in a drunken dance around the corner. The man was humming tunelessly to himself—a man in a rain-soaked shirt that clung to his thick, pasty looking body. His hair was sparse and his scalp was scaly with filth. His face was bearded and dirty and had a slight greenish tinge.

"You," Leo blurted out. "How can I get back to a Worker's Community? The one I worked in was the Box Factory at Sunup, California!"

THE MAN laughed. His eyes flickered in and out of focus. "Easy, buddy; easiest think in this lousiest of all possible wor'ls. Jus' go to the tubetrain station. Same one you came in here on, buddy. You get on the first train going out."

"You sure of that?" Leo asked. "Is that *all* you have to do?"

"That's all, buddy. I oughta' know. I done it plenty times." The man lurched and almost fell. "Lot a' guys coming in here, they wanta' get out; they don't like it. I don't like it; either. Once in while I think maybe I'm ready go back to driving tractor and be happy all time. I'm all well

again I say to m'self—brain going jus' right—be happy res' of my life. So I hop on train goin' West outa' this damned burg!" The man's voice raised to a kind of forlorn cackle. "But they got a Pattern Checker all waitin' at the wes' end a' the line. An' I al'ays get shuttled right back 'ere again, buddy; ev'ry time. So then I get drunk 'nuff to drown my sick brain. Thas what happens, buddy. Roun' an' roun'..." He staggered away and then fell on his knees in a puddle of muddy water.

"Then how can you tell if you can get out of here or not?" Leo yelled. Leo ran, lifted the drunk up; the man could hardly stop cackling at something.

"You can't tell, buddy. Only the ole' Pattern Checkers can tell you whethe' you're right for a nice little ole' community life or not. I guess here you jus' got to figure yourself out for yourself!"

The man heaved himself away from Leo and stumbled into the dark.

Leo stood there a long time listening to the way the rain washed time away into nowhere down the gutters. He stared into the dark and tried to think about the way things were.

He turned and ran back to-

ward that room where Diana waited for him.

Like part of himself, he thought, calling him back to himself. And yet—he seemed to run in two directions at once, drawn by some exhilarating vision, and pursued by the fear of his own desires.

SHE WAS wearing a shiny-surfaced coat and waiting for him on a corner, a block before he got to her place.

She moved into his arms and they stood breathing hard together, tight together, the rain falling on their faces. Her wet lips sought his again with a hunger he had never felt in another before and had never quite dared to admit in himself. "I thought you'd come back," she whispered. "Or maybe I was only hoping."

He didn't say anything.

"Leo—I've always loved what I thought you were. Now you're here, and I love what I'm sure you really are. But you don't know who you are, do you, Leo? And if you don't know that, maybe you can't love me."

"I don't know," he said finally. "I don't know myself—nothing at all."

A sob was in her voice. "Oh, Leo—darling Leo...all your life you've kept some good part of yourself, a strong part, alive. You've fought such a

good fight inside yourself, preserving yourself. Back there in that damn worker's paradise, where everyone was a smiling robot, you never quite bought it. Where everyone was only a dog grateful and smiling and licking its master's metal hand, you wouldn't quite crawl. I wanted to cry when you fought back Leo. Leo—please—let's go on and fight it through. No matter where it goes! Leo—I can fight alone; but it would be so much better to do it with you—with someone who had the courage to face freedom."

She shook him. He didn't feel the pain in his arm; he only felt the ache in his head. "Leo—"

He shook his head. "I've got to get back to sanity. Diana—listen now. Granted the worker's paradise wasn't good for us: is this better?"

"It's *better*; it's very bad, yes—but even so, it's a lot better than what drove us crazy."

"It can't be better here. All this murder and violence, suspicion, distrust, everybody out to do everybody else. Hate everywhere. Everything living on hate. This couldn't be the only alternative to the other. If it is, then the other has to be better."

She kissed him again. He could feel her body straining against him, and he pulled her

hard against him and crushed his lips against her mouth. She whispered. "Leo—there is a third choice."

"Third choice? Doctor Steiner never mentioned any such thing."

"But there is. He doesn't even know about it, probably; but there is." She turned her head toward the dark end of the alley. "There is one, Leo but I haven't had the courage to try it. There's a Third City, Leo. As far as I know, no one's ever gone there. But it's there—if anyone has the guts to try it."

He turned and held on to her hand as he started down the alley. "It's no use, Diana. In a way, I can understand how you feel; I admire you for it. But it just isn't for me. I came here thinking it would be better. The Third City—it must be unthinkable!"

"I guess it is," she said. "I guess no one has the guts for it any more."

LATER, she pulled him inside a darkened doorway. In the faint glow from the streetlight nearby he saw the Security Officers walk to the corner and stand there. He also saw the way his own arm was bleeding now with a stubborn persistence. The trickle had become a stream from the soaked bandage.

The officers went on around the corner. Diana gripped Leo's hand and led him on along this nameless street. She knew a friend who ran a drug store, where he could get his arm fixed. She was taking him there, she had said.

I'm cured, he kept thinking over and over, and so all I have to do is catch that tubetrain going West.

He blurted it out.

She sighed. "This place has its quota of shuttlers, Leo. They spend their lives shuttling back and forth. They keep thinking they're cured, and they take a tubetrain West; a Pattern Checker sends them back. Once in a great while they don't come back. Most of them do. They end up lusher, or something a lot worse. If you could just stay and work it out, Leo—really work out what you are, what you want what you really feel—then you'd feel proud that a Pattern Checker didn't have to do it for you."

"Someone ought to be here to tell a person—"

"There's no one here to tell you anything, Leo; no one but yourself. That's the difference. That's what makes this place better, no matter how bad it is. You're afraid of death. Oh, Leo—everyone has to die. But back there—

you were never really alive!"

She waited for him to answer but he couldn't. "You want to go back, Leo. Tell me this then—what was the matter when you woke up one morning back there and knew that it was all wrong?"

He couldn't answer that either.

THE MAN was scared when he saw Diana, but he led them into a back room where boxes and shelves were heavy with jars and bottles. The man was small and dark, and wearing a contrasting white jacket. He looked accusingly at Diana, as though she had done him some injustice.

The man got bandages and bottles, and a small pair of sheers, and put them on a small glass-topped table near where Leo sat down with a heaviness out of which he was sure he could never rise again.

But Diana seemed alivened by it. Her eyes were brighter now, more intense.

She told the clerk to bring bandages over, some sulpha salve, a bottle of sulpha tablets to stop infection from developing in Leo. The clerk looked at her, his face a mixture of fear and resentment. "You shouldn't have come here," the clerk said as he walked out the door toward the invisible front part of the

store. "Getting me in bad with the cops; getting Gehron on my neck maybe. You shouldn't have done it!"

She explained to Leo then, as she worked on his arm herself, adaptly. She had worked here once, for a while; she had been—partly at least, she said—the clerk's girl friend. Then she had found out the drug store was really a front for peddling dope. So far the cops knew nothing about it. Here she had met Gehron.

SOMETHING totally unfamiliar burned up inside Leo, then; something he vaguely knew to be jealousy. She seemed to sense it, and smiled a little. "I needed somebody," she said, "but I really hated both of them. They've been the only ones. Finally I hated myself for being involved. I had to get out. I couldn't do anything like that again."

Just words, he thought, but he believed her. And then his throat tightened, and he could feel his heart pounding in his temples as he saw her take a small but deadly looking gun out of her handbag and put it in a handy place on the table. She dabbled iodine in the raw sore. He almost screamed—and then he forgot about the pain. Now he knew that you could forget about

pain. He felt her presence—her body strong and lithe moulded by the wet torn thinness of her skirt and louse. The sharp high swell of her breasts, the full, strong sweep of her thighs, the wet sensuous power of her lips and the—

But what the hell! He was getting out. *He was getting out!*

"I had to leave Sunup," he said almost desperately. "It was just because my brain waves were wrong..."

She stepped back. "You knew it was you, not them, huh, Leo. That's the way they've got it set up. Everything's so nice and perfect, it *has* to be you!"

"But it was—"

"Sure, your brain waves. But they only register the fact that you aren't conforming. They don't tell whether you're sane or not—whether your brain wave pattern is the right one or not—for you!"

He stared at her.

"If you know, or knew, it was you that was wrong, Leo, then why can't you be sure now that it's wrong or right? Why can't you be sure *now* that your brain is right for the Community, or wrong for it, right for the Second City, or wrong for it?" She shook her head. "No, Leo; that has nothing to do with it. It's

when you feel right with yourself—no matter what a Pattern Checker says, no matter what an authority tells you, no matter whether someone's smiling at you or not—then you're all right, Leo. Only then are you ever all right."

She kissed him tenderly on the lips and then finished bandaging his arm. "It's all up to you, finally, if you've got the guts to face freedom, Leo. I got out. I had a nice home, a husband back in Sun-up, but he was dead, and he never knew why. Never questioned it, either; he was too dead even for that—too dead to wonder. But I wasn't that dead, Leo, and neither were you."

She went on. "I twisted a little crank every time a box went by. Sometimes when a buzzer told that one of the boxes wasn't made just right, I'd push the box off the belt. That was living."

She finished tying the bandage, then looped part of it around his neck to make a sling.

VI

HE JUMPED up. He tried to yell at her, yell about how couldn't she see that the Second City was a sordid hell!

He saw his reflection in the glass case, but it didn't seem to be Leo Bondy.

The face wasn't smiling. It was blue-splotched, lined with hardened blood; he saw a dirt-caked beard. A dirty, wounded stranger stood there; a damp hulk with red-rimmed eyes, and a face twisted with wrenching feelings of things mysterious, that had never before had a name, that he had never before known could exist, except in his dreams.

That was what stood there. Something out of one of his own nightmares.

From inside of him, came a careful little whisper: Maybe those awful nightmares had been healthier than the lifeless world from which he had escaped into them.

Fear: You couldn't fear death, violence, horror unless it was possible. Such things were only impossible if you were already dead.

You can't be afraid of life if you're part of the living dead.

"Diana," he whispered. "Aren't you afraid too—of all this?"

He put his arm around her waist and she moved against him. "Sure. You can be afraid of not being free, too. You can be alive and not be free; and that's worse than being dead."

She turned toward the door

leading into the front of the store. "I don't trust him," she said tensely, "that little sneak! That's why I didn't ask him to prepare a hypo of sulpha for an intravenous injection. He's been out front too long, Leo! I forgot; there are telephones out there!"

She ran to the door, opened it a little and peered out. Her body stiffened. "He's not out there now Leo."

He felt the stillness rush in like walls all around. Somehow, he knew now, that the conversations, the arguments, all those things were over now. For good and all.

DIANA STARTED for the front door. She changed her mind; grabbed up the gun and moved fast toward the rear door that led into the back alley. Outside, Leo moved with her a few steps along the greasy wet shine of the brick wall.

The ends of the alley were tiny pinpoints of light, seeming a million miles away. Leo knew that something horrible was about to happen—that he and Diana Wynwood were but a few rapid heartbeats away from death. He saw the waiting shine of the gun in Diana's hand. Her face suddenly hard and pale and ridged like a mask wet in the misting rain.

"Well, Leo," she whispered. She took hold of his good hand. They swung back flat to the wall. "This may be it."

It? Meaning anything and everything. *It.* Life or death, or life-death, *It.* Meaning nothing you really could tell anyone about, but which you could feel and know inside yourself with a sweet and hellish anguish when you faced it finally and forever.

It. The beginning, the end. the amorphous hazy middle. everything in a two-letter word.

It.

Leo saw a face. It was something wet; a slash of colorless white paste oozing out of a dark doorway across the alley. It was a second face and then another face. White wet masks bobbing forward. It was smiling, a frozen distorted leering kind of smile. Gun metal shone.

THE MORE prominent grinning pallid mask twisted and a grating voice came out like something already dead. "I told you, honey, what I'd do if you ran out on me."

"So now you're doing it," Diana said. "Honest Gehron who never breaks a promise."

The mask looked at Leo. "You too, sucker; dead, you won't ever be able to say you're not Gehron."

From about five feet away the gun pointed into Leo's stomach. "You first," Gehron said.

Diana stepped in front of Leo; she jerked the gun around from behind her in the same gesture. Leo heard the incredible blast of sound, and a flash of light reflected from the wet walls.

"Run Leo!" she shouted.

Run?

Run, Leo?

Leo stood frozen inside and out, for only a fraction of a second, but a lifetime streamed through the constricted conduits of his body and blasted something loose in a sudden flooding flare of broken dams.

It wasn't anything out there. Not a face, or a bunch of faces promising death.

It was something a man, every man, has somewhere inside of him that nothing, perhaps maybe not even death, can take away. It was whatever was in Leo, that had always been in him, fighting to be free. It was being able to fight back—even to die—for what you knew was right for you.

It was Leo Bondy.

LEO BONDY could see one of the faces down on the pavement moving slightly. Diana was screaming for him

to run, but Leo Bondy grinned slightly because he knew she didn't really mean it. She knew him well enough to know that he was not going to run. To run, was to run away from Leo Bondy.

He gripped the handle of the garbage can, using his good arm. He lunged around, swinging the soggy rusted heaviness of it. Its torn edges flashed like knives. The full weight of Leo's body was behind the weight of the can. He felt the impact of it, clear to his feet, as Gehron tried to struggle upward and the can hit his face.

Gehron fell under the slide of garbage and the can rolled over the pavement. A siren screamed, and screamed closer. Other figures were running. Guns thudded wetly, and there were flashes of light which Leo scarcely cared about. He heard Diana scream.

He turned to catch her as she fell. He eased her down gently and took the gun from her hand.

He turned, crouching a little. It was not even unfamiliar now. All his life, it seemed, he had done this in his dreams. He was too close to miss, and he felt the gun jump hard against his hand as he fired; the man running in toward him seemed to jump to the pavement and roll over twice.

Gehron staggered up. Leo jumped over the other body, getting close as possible. Even in dreams he had never fired a gun before—not that he could remember. Rotting vegetables, peelings, rinds and dripping wetness clung all over Gehron. But the gun came out of the rottenness and exploded in Leo's face.

The fire burned, searing his neck. Leo threw himself forward and pounded at the face, carrying the body back and down with his weight. He fired twice more; he clubbed with the empty gun. After that, to be sure, he lay there with his fingers digging into Gehron's throat until the pulse of life was thoroughly gone from it.

And even after that he lay there, feeling his fingers deep in Gehron's dead throat. But finally he took his hand away, and it seemed numbed and rigid in the shape of death.

WHEN HE lifted Diana to her feet he felt the sticky warmth, and then he held her close and kissed her. "Between us," she said, "we have two good arms now, Leo."

The sirens were very close now.

"Well, so-long, Leo," she said.

The sirens were coming in from the south. He pulled her

hard against him, half-supporting her as he made for the other end of the alley.

He saw a man starting to get into a car and heard the jangle of keys. He came up behind him and pushed the gun into the man's spine. "Start running," Leo said. "But give me the keys."

The man dropped the keys and ran hard, his heels clattering on the wet pavement; he didn't look back.

Leo opened the car door, on the driver's side. "Can you drive?" he asked. "You'd better if you can; I don't know how."

She got in. He went around to the other side, got in and shut the door. The car moved along the street slowly, and down at the other end of the alley the sirens were screaming.

"Your arm hurt bad?" Leo asked.

"Not bad, I hope; right now it doesn't matter." They turned a corner and went through another alley, then out into a wider street. The glistening eyes of a cat caught the glare, then fled.

"I guess," she said, "you'll be heading for the Station for a tubetrain West, Leo."

He smiled. "You know better than that; you've always known it. So have I, but I might never have realized I

knew—if it hadn't been for you. I'm heading East. I'd like you to go with me."

"East?"

HER FACE jerked around and her eyes seemed abnormally bright. "You know where that goes—that way—?"

He shook his head.

"The Third City."

He shrugged. "So—then that's where we go, Diana. The Third City."

"Leo—we'll be the first ones I know of to go there."

"I hope we're not the last. Anyway, our little Communities weren't right—but this isn't right either. To be free, a man shouldn't have to fight and kill like this. So all I can think of to do is go on, look for a place that's right. It shouldn't be just a choice between Sunup, or this."

The car moved faster. The streets got rougher, narrower and darker. A thinning out began. The buildings became sparser. A cold wind began to moan around the car.

The car moved in and out of lakes of shadow, away from the city, and the lights of the city began to bleed away behind them into darkness.

The road started to twist. It became rocky. The car whined with protest and slowed a little, but kept on going. Its lights shone through the murky dimness of thick trees and brush.

"Where is the Third City?" Leo asked.

She glanced at him. "There isn't any Third City; not yet. The Third City, Leo, we have to make that one for ourselves."

————— ★ —————

ARTHUR C. CLARKE Guest of Honor

The World Science Fiction Society, Inc., sponsor of the 1956 World Science Fiction Convention (the 14th such convention), which will be held at the Hotel Biltmore from August 31 through September 3, 1956, announces that this year's Guest of Honor will be the distinguished British author, Arthur C. Clarke. Memberships in the Society, which include your ticket to the Convention, cost two dollars each, and should be sent to the **WORLD SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY, Inc.**, PO Box 272, Radio City Station, New York 19, N. Y.

If a great composer, still active at the time of his death, were resurrected scientifically, could he continue his career?

ART - WORK

by JAMES BLISH

(author of "Giants in the Earth")

illustrated by ORBAN

INSTANTLY, he remembered dying. He remembered it, however, as if at two removes—as though he were remembering a memory, rather than an actual event; as though he himself had not really been there when he died.

Yet the memory was all from his own point of view, not that of some detached and disembodied observer which might have been his soul. He had been most conscious of the rasping, unevenly-drawn movements of the air in his chest. Blurring rapidly, the doctor's face had bent over him, loomed, come closer, and then had vanished as the doctor's head passed below his cone of vision, turned sideways to listen to his lungs.

It had become rapidly darker, and then, only then, had he realized that these were to be his last minutes. He had tried dutifully to say Pauline's name, but his memory contained no record of the sound—only of the rattling breath, and of the film of sootiness thickening in the air, blotting out everything for an instant.

Only an instant, and then the memory was over. The room was bright again, and the ceiling, he noticed with wonder, had turned a soft green. The doctor's head lifted again and looked down at him.

IT WAS A different doctor. This one was a far younger man, with an ascetic face and gleaming, almost fey eyes. There was no doubt about it. One of the last conscious thoughts he had had was that of gratitude that the attending physician, there at the end, had not been the one who secretly hated him for his one-time associations with the Nazi hierarchy. The attending doctor, instead, had worn an expression amusingly proper for that of a Swiss expert called to the deathbed of an eminent man: a mixture of worry at the prospect of losing so eminent a patient, and complacency at the thought



The world of 2161 was about to hear a newly-completed opera by Richard Strauss...

that at the old man's age, nobody could blame this doctor if he died. At 85, pneumonia is a serious matter, with or without penicillin.

"You're all right now," the new doctor said, freeing his patient's head of a whole series of little silver rods which had been clinging to it by a sort of network cap. "Rest a minute and try to be calm. Do you know your name?"

He drew a cautious breath. There seemed to be nothing at all the matter with his lungs now; indeed, he felt positively healthy. "Certainly," he said, a little nettled. "Do you know yours?"

The doctor smiled crookedly. "You're in character, it appears," he said. "My name is Barkun Kris; I am a psychiatrist. Yours?"

"Richard Strauss."

"Very good," Dr. Kris said, and turned away. Strauss, however, had already been diverted by a new singularity. *Strauss* is a word as well as a name in German; it has many meanings—an ostrich, a bouquet—von Wolzogen had had a high old time working all the possible puns into the libretto of *Feuersnot*. And it happened to be the first German word to be spoken either by himself or by Dr. Kris since that twice-removed moment of death. The language was not French or Italian, either. It was most like English, but not the English Strauss knew; nevertheless, he was having no trouble speaking it and even thinking in it.

Well, he thought, *I'll be able to conduct "The Love of Danae" after all. It isn't every composer who can premiere his own opera posthumously.* Still, there was something queer about all this—the queerest part of all being that conviction, which would not go away, that he had actually been dead for just a short time. Of course medicine was making great strides, but—

"EXPLAIN all this," he said, lifting himself to one elbow. The bed was different, too, and not nearly as comfortable as the one in

which he had died. As for the room, it looked more like a dynamo shed than a sickroom. Had modern medicine taken to reviving its corpses on the floor of the Siemens-Schukert plant?

"In a moment," Dr. Kris said. He finished rolling some machine back into what Strauss impatiently supposed to be its place, and crossed to the pallet. "Now. There are many things you'll have to take for granted without attempting to understand them, Dr. Strauss. Not everything in the world today is explicable in terms of your assumptions. Please bear that in mind."

"Very well. Proceed."

"The date," Dr. Kris said, "is 2161 by your calendar—or, in other words, it is now two hundred and twelve years after your death. Naturally, you'll realize that by this time nothing remains of your body but the bones. The body you have now was volunteered for your use. Before you look into a mirror to see what it's like, remember that its physical difference from the one you were used to is all in your favor. It's in perfect health, not unpleasant for other people to look at, and its physiological age is about fifty."

A miracle? No, not in this new age, surely. It was simply



a work of science. But what a science! This was Nietzsche's eternal recurrence and the immortality of the superman combined into one.

"And where is this?" the composer said.

"In Port York, part of the State of Manhattan, in the United States. You will find the country less changed in some respects that I imagine you anticipate. Other changes, of course, will seem radical to you; but it's hard for me to predict which ones will strike you that way. A certain resilience on your part will bear cultivating."

"I understand," Strauss said, sitting up. "One question, please; is it still possible for a composer to make a living in this country?"

"Indeed it is," Dr. Kris said, smiling. "As we expect you to do. It is one of the purposes for which we've—brought you back."

"I gather, then," Strauss said somewhat drily, "that there is still a demand for my music. The critics in the old days—"

"That's not quite how it is," Dr. Kris said. "I understand some of your work is still played, but frankly I know very little about your current status. My interest is rather—"

A DOOR OPENED somewhere, and another man came in. He was older and more ponderous than Kris and had a certain air of academicism; but he too was wearing the oddly-tailored surgeon's gown, and looked upon Kris' patient with the glowing eyes of an artist. "A success, Kris?" he said. "Congratulations."

"They're not in order yet," Dr. Kris said. "The final proof is what counts. Dr. Strauss, if you feel strong

enough, Dr. Seirds and I would like to ask you some questions. We'd like to make sure your memory is clear."

"Certainly. Go ahead."

"According to our records," Kris said, "you once knew a man whose initials were RKL; this was while you were conducting at the Vienna Staatsoper." He made the double "a" at least twice too long, as though German were a dead language he was striving to pronounce in some "classical" accent. "What was his name, and who was he?"

"That would be Kurt List—his first name was Richard, but he didn't use it. He was assistant stage manager."

The two doctors looked at each other. "Why did you offer to write a new overture to *The Woman Without A Shadow*," and give the manuscript to the City of Vienna?"

"So I wouldn't have to pay the garbage removal tax on the Maria Theresa villa they had given me."

"In the back yard of your house at Garmisch-Partinkirchen there was a tombstone. What was written on it?"

STRAUSS frowned. That was a question he would be happy to be unable to answer. If one is to play childish jokes upon oneself, it's best not to carve them in stone,

and put the carving where you can't help seeing it every time you go out to tinker with the Mercedes. "It says," he replied wearily, "*'Sacred to the memory of Guntram, Minnesinger, slain in a horrible way by his father's own symphony orchestra.'*"

"When was *'Guntram'* premiered?"

"In—let me see—1894, I believe."

"Where?"

"In Weimar."

"Who was the leading lady?"

"Pauline de Ahna."

"What happened to her afterward?"

"I married her. Is she—"
Strauss began anxiously.

"No," Dr. Kris said. "I'm sorry, but we lack the data to reconstruct more or less ordinary people."

The composer sighed. He did not know whether to be worry or not. He had loved Pauline, to be sure; on the other hand, it would be pleasant to be able to live the new life without being forced to take off one's shoes every time one entered the house, so as not to scratch the polished hardwood floors. And also pleasant, perhaps, to have two o'clock in the afternoon come by without hearing Pauline's everlasting, "*Richard—jetzt komponiert!*"

"Next question," he said.

FOR REASONS which Strauss did not understand, but was content to take for granted, he was separated from Drs. Kris and Seirds as soon as both were satisfied that the composer's memory was reliable and his health stable. His estate, he was given to understand, had long since been broken up—a sorry end for what had been one of the principal fortunes of Europe—but he was given sufficient money to set up lodgings and resume an active life. He was provided, too, with introductions which proved valuable.

It took longer than he had expected to adjust to the changes that had taken place in music alone. Music was, he quickly began to suspect, a dying art, which would soon have a status not much above that held by flower-arranging back in what he thought of as his own century. Certainly it couldn't be denied that the trend toward fragmentation, already visible back in his own time, had proceeded almost to completion in 2161.

He paid no more attention to American popular tunes than he had bothered to pay in his previous life. Yet it was evident that their assembly-line production methods—all

the ballad composers—openly used a slide-rule-like device called a Hit Machine—now had their counterparts almost throughout serious music.

The conservatives these days, for instance, were the 12-tone composers—always, in Strauss' opinion, a drily mechanical lot, but never more so than now. Their gods—Berg, Schoenberg, von Webern—were looked upon by the concert-going public as great masters, on the abstruse side perhaps, but as worthy of reverence as any of the Three B's.

THERE WAS one wing of the conservatives, however, which had gone the 12-tone procedure one better. These men composed what was called "stochastic music," put together by choosing each individual note by consultation with tables of random numbers. Their bible, their basic text, was a volume called *Operational Aesthetics*, which in turn derived from a discipline called information theory; and not one word of it seemed to touch upon any of the techniques and customs of composition which Strauss knew. The ideal of this group was to produce music which would be "universal"—that is, wholly devoid of any trace of the composer's individuality,

wholly a musical expression of the universal Laws of Chance. The Laws of Chance seemed to have a style of their own, all right; but to Strauss it seemed the style of an idiot child being taught to hammer a flat piano, to keep him from getting into trouble.

By far the largest body of work being produced, however, fell into a category misleadingly called "science-music." The term reflected nothing but the titles of the works, which dealt with space flight, time travel, and other subjects of a romantic or an unlikely nature. There was nothing in the least scientific about the music, which consisted of a melange of clichés, imitations of natural sounds, and stylistic tricks—in many of which Strauss was horrified to see his own time-distorted and diluted image.

The most popular form of science-music was a nine-minute composition called a concerto, though it bore no resemblance at all to the classical concerto form; it was instead a sort of free rhapsody after Rachmaninoff—long after. A typical one—"Song of Deep Space," it was called, by somebody named H. Valerion Krafft—began with a loud assault on the tam-tam, after which all the strings rushed up the scale in unison, fol-

lowed at a respectful distance by the harp and one clarinet in parallel 6/4's. At the top of the scale cymbals were bashed together, *forte possible*, and the whole orchestra launched itself into a major-minor, wailing sort of melody; the whole orchestra, that is, except for the French horns, which were plodding back down the scale again in what was evidently supposed to be a countermelody. The second phrase of the theme was picked up by a solo trumpet with a suggestion of tremulo; the orchestra died back to its roots to await the next cloud burst, and at this point—as any four-year-old could have predicted—the piano entered with the second theme.

BEHIND the orchestra stood a group of thirty women, ready to come in with a wordless chorus intended to suggest the eeriness of Deep Space—but at this point, too, Strauss had already learned to get up and leave. After a few such experiences he could also count upon meeting in the lobby Sindi Noniss, the agent to which Dr. Kris had introduced him, and who was handling the reborn composer's output—what there was of it thus far. Sindi had come to expect these walkouts on the part of his client, and pa-

tiently awaited them, standing beneath a bust of Gian-Carlo Menotti; but he liked them less and less, and lately had been greeting them by turning alternately red and while like a toti-potent barber-pole.

"You shouldn't have done it," he burst out after the Krafft incident. "You can't just walk out on a new Krafft composition. The man's the president of the Interplanetary Society for Contemporary Music. How am I ever going to persuade them that you're a contemporary if you keep snubbing them?"

"What does it matter?" Strauss said. "They don't know me by sight."

"You're wrong; they know you very well, and they're watching every move you make. You're the first major composer the psi-sculptors ever tackled, and the ISCM would be glad to turn you back with a rejection slip."

"Why?"

"Oh," said Sindi, "there are lots of reasons. The sculptors are snobs; so are the ISCM boys. Each of them wants to prove to the other that their own art is the king of them all. And then there's the competition; it would be easier to flunk you than to let you into the market. I really think you'd better go back in. I

could make up some excuse—"

"No," Strauss said shortly. "I have work to do."

"But that's just the point, Richard. How are we going to get an opera produced without the ISCM? It isn't as though you wrote theremin solos, or something that didn't cost so—"

"I have work to do," he said, and left.

AND HE did: work which absorbed him as had no other project during the thirty years of his former life. He had scarcely touched pen to music paper—both had been astonishingly hard to find—when he had realized that nothing in his long career had provided him with touchstones by which to judge what music he should write *now*.

The old tricks came swarming back by the thousands, to be sure: the sudden, unexpected key-changes at the crest of a melody; the interval stretching; the piling of divided strings, playing in the high harmonics, upon the already tottering top of a climax; the scurry and bustle as phrases were passed like lightning from one choir of the orchestra to another; the flashing runs in the brass, the chuckling in the clarinets, the snarling mixtures of colors to

emphasize dramatic tension—all of them.

But none of them satisfied him now. He had been content with them for most of a lifetime, and had made them do an astonishing amount of work. But now it was time to strike out afresh. Some of the tricks, indeed, actively repelled him: where had he gotten the notion, clung to for decades, that violins screaming out in unison somewhere in the stratosphere was a sound interesting enough to be worth repeating inside a single composition, let alone in all of them?

And nobody, he reflected contentedly, ever approached such a new beginning better equipped. In addition to the past lying available in his memory, he had always had a technical armamentarium second to none; even the hostile critics had granted him that. Now that he was, in a sense, composing his first opera—his first after fifteen of them!—he had every opportunity to make it a masterpiece.

And every such intention.

THERE WERE, of course, many minor distractions. One of them was that search for old-fashioned score paper, and a pen and ink with which to write on it. Very few of

the modern composers, it developed, wrote their music at all. A large bloc of them used tape, patching together snippets of tone and sound snipped from other tapes, superimposing one tape on another, and varying the results by twirling an elaborate array of knobs this way or that. Almost all the composers of 3-V scores, on the other hand, wrote on the sound-track itself, rapidly scribbling jagged wiggly lines which, when passed through a photocell-audio circuit, produced a noise reasonably like an orchestra playing music, overtones and all.

The last-ditch conservatives who still wrote notes on paper, did so with the aid of a musical typewriter. The device, Strauss had to admit, seemed perfected at last; it had manuals and stops like an organ, but it was not much more than twice as large as a standard letter-writing typewriter, and produced a neat page. But he was satisfied with his own spidery, highly-legible manuscript and refused to abandon it, badly though the one pen-nib he had been able to buy coarsened it. It helped to tie him to his past.

Joining the ISCM had also caused him some bad moments, even after Sindi had

worked him around the political roadblocks. The Society man who examined his qualifications as a member had run through the questions with no more interest than might have been shown by a veterinarian examining his four thousandth sick calf.

"Had anything published?"

"Yes, nine tone-poems, about 300 songs, an—"

"Not when you were alive," the examiner said, somewhat disquietingly. "I mean since the sculptors turned you out again."

"Since the sculptors—ah, I understand. Yes, a string quartet, two song cycles, a—"

"Good. Alfie, write down 'songs.' Play an instrument?"

"Piano."

"Hm." The examiner studied his fingernails. "Oh, well. Do you read music? Or do you use a Scriber, or tape-clips? Or a Machine?"

"I read."

"**H**ERE." The examiner sat Strauss down in front of a viewing lectern, over the lit surface of which an endless belt of translucent paper was travelling. On the paper was an immensely magnified sound-track. "Whistle me the tune of that, and name the instruments it sounds like."

"I don't read that *Musik-*

sticheln," Strauss said frostily, "or write it, either. I use standard notation, on music paper."

"Alfie, write down 'Reads notes only.'" He laid a sheet of greyly-printed music on the lectern above the ground glass. "Whistle me that."

"That" proved to be a popular tune called "Vangs, Snifters and Store-Credit Snooky" which had been written on a Hit Machine in 2159 by a guitar-faking politician who sang it at campaign rallies. (In some respects, Strauss reflected, the United States had indeed not changed very much.) It had become so popular that anybody could have whistled it from the title alone, whether he could read the music or not. Strauss whistled it, and to prove his bona fides added, "It's in the key of B flat."

The examiner went over to the green-painted upright piano and hit one greasy black key. The instrument was horribly out of tune—the note was much nearer to the standard 440/cps A than it was to B flat—but the examiner said, "So it is. Alfie, write down, 'Also reads flats'. All right, son, you're a member. Nice to have you with us; not many people can read that old-style notation any more. A lot of them think they're too good for it."

"Thank you," Strauss said.

"My feeling is, if it was good enough for the old masters, it's good enough for us. We don't have people like them with us these days, it seems to me. Except for Dr. Krafft, of course. They were great back in the old days—men like Shilkret, Steiner, Tiomkin, and Pearl...and Wilder and Jannsen. Real goffin."

"*Doch gewiss*," Strauss said politely.

BUT THE work went forward. He was taking a little income now, from small works. People seemed to feel a special interest in a composer who had come out of the psi-sculptors' laboratories; and in addition, the material itself, Strauss was quite certain, had merits of its own to help sell it.

It was the opera which counted, however. That grew and grew under his pen, as fresh and new as his new life, as founded in knowledge and ripeness as his long full memory. Finding a libretto had been troublesome at first. While it was possible that something existed that might have served among the current scripts for 3-V—though he doubted it—he found himself unable to tell the good from the bad through the fog

cast over both by incomprehensibly technical production directions. Eventually, and for only the third time in his whole career, he had fallen back upon a play written in a language other than his own, and—for the first time—decided to set it in that language.

The play was Christopher Fry's "*Venus Observed*", in all ways a perfect Strauss opera libretto, as he came gradually to realize. Though nominally a comedy, with a complex farcical plot, it was a verse play with considerable depth to it, and a number of characters who cried out to be brought by music into three dimensions, plus a strong undercurrent of autumnal tragedy, of leaf-fall and apple-fall—precisely the kind of contradictory dramatic mixture which von Hofmannsthal had supplied him in "*The Knight of the Rose*", in "*Ariadne at Naxos*", and in "*Arabella*".

ALAS FOR von Hofmannsthal, but here was another long-dead playwright who seemed nearly as gifted; and the musical opportunities were immense. There was, for instance, the fire which ended act two; what a gift for a composer to whom orchestration and counterpoint were as

important as air and water!
Or take the moment where
Perpetua shoots the apple
from the Duke's hand; in that
one moment a single passing
reference could add Rossini's
marmoreal "*William Tell*" to
the musical texture as nothing
but an ironic footnote!
And the Duke's great curtain
speech, beginning:

Shall I be sorry for myself?
In mortality's name
I'll be sorry for myself.
Branches and boughs,
Brown hills, the valleys faint
with brume,
A burnish on the lake; . . .

There was a speech for a
great tragic comedian, in the
spirit of Falstaff; the final
union of laughter and tears,
punctuated by the sleepy comments
of Reedbeck, to whose
sonorous snore (trombones,
no less than five of them, *con
sordini*?) the opera would
gently end. . .

What could be better? And
yet he had come upon the
play only by the unlikely series
of accidents. At first he
had planned to do a straight
knockabout farce, in the
idiom of "*The Silent
Woman*", just to warm himself
up. Remembering that
Zweig had adapted that
libretto for him, in the old
days, from a play by Ben Jon-

son, Strauss had begun to
search out English plays of
the period just after Jonson's,
and had promptly run
aground on an awful specimen
in heroic couplets called
"*Venice Preserv'd*", by one
William Atwe. The Fry play
had directly followed the
Atwe in the card catalog, and
he had looked at it out of curiosity;
why should a Twentieth
Century playwright be punning
on a title from the Eighteenth?

After two pages of the Fry
play, the minor puzzle of the
pun disappeared entirely from
his concern. His luck was running
again; he had an opera.

SINDI WORKED miracles
in arranging for the performance.
The date of the premiere
was set even before the score
was finished, reminding Strauss
pleasantly of those heady days
when Fuerstner had been snatching
the conclusion of "*Elektra*"
off his work-table a page at a
time, before the ink was even
dry, to rush it to the engraver
before publication deadline.
The situation now, however,
was even more complicated,
for some of the score had to
be scribed, some of it taped,
some of it engraved in the old
way, to meet the new techniques
of performance; there were
moments when Sindi

seemed to be turning quite gray.

But "*Venus Observed*" was, as usual, forthcoming complete from Strauss' pen in plenty of time. Writing the music in first draft had been hellishly hard work, much more like being reborn than had been that confused awakening in Barkun Kris' laboratory, with its overtones of being dead instead; but Strauss found that he still retained all of his old ability to score from the draft almost effortlessly, as undisturbed by Sindi's half-audible worrying in the room with him as he was by the terrifying supersonic bangs of the rockets that bulleted invisibly over the city.

When he was finished, he had two days still to spare before the beginning of rehearsals. With those, furthermore, he would have nothing to do. The techniques of performance in this age were so completely bound up with the electronic arts as to reduce his own experience—he, the master Kapellmeister of them all—to the hopelessly primitive.

HE DID NOT mind. The music, as written, would speak for itself. In the meantime he found it grateful to forget the months-long preoccupation with the stage for a

while. He went back to the library and browsed lazily through old poems, vaguely seeking texts for a song or two. He knew better than to bother with recent poets; they could not speak to him, and he knew it. The Americans of his own age, he thought, might give him a clue to understanding this America of 2161; and if some such poem gave birth to a song, so much the better.

The search was relaxing and he gave himself up to enjoying it. Finally he struck a tape that he liked: a tape read in a cracked old voice that twanged of Idaho as that voice had twanged in 1910, in Strauss' own ancient youth. The poet's name was Pound; he said, on the tape *

"...the souls of all men great
At times pass through us,
And we are melted into them,
and are not
Save reflexions of their souls.
Thus I am Dante for a space
and am
One Francois Villon, ballad-
lord, and thief
Or am such holy ones I may
not write,
Lest blasphemy be writ against
my name;

*The full text of this poem may be found in *Personae* by Ezra Pound (published by New Directions).

This for an instant and the
flame is gone.

" 'Tis as in midmost us there
glows a sphere

Translucent, molten gold, that
is the 'I'

And into this some form pro-
jects itself:

Christus, or John, or eke the
Florentine;

And as the clear space is not
if a form's

Imposed thereon,

So cease we from all being
for the time,

And these, the Masters of the
Soul, live on."

He smiled. That lesson had been written again and again, from Plato onward. Yet the poem was a history of his own case, a sort of theory for the metempsychosis he had undergone, and in its formal way it was moving. It would be fitting to make a little hymn of it, in honor of his own rebirth, and of the poet's insight.

A series of solemn, breathless chords framed themselves in his inner ear, against which the words might be intoned in a high, gently bending hush at the beginning...and then a dramatic passage in which the great names of Dante and Villon would enter ringing like challenges to Time... He wrote for a while in his note-

book before he returned the spool to its shelf.

These, he thought, are good auspices.

AND SO the night of the premiere arrived, the audience pouring into the hall, the 3-V cameras riding on no visible supports through the air, and Sindi calculating his share of his client's earnings by a complicated game he played on his fingers, the basic law of which seemed to be that one plus one equals ten. The hall filled to the roof with people from every class, as though what was to come would be a circus rather than an opera.

There were, surprisingly, nearly fifty of the aloof and aristocratic psi-sculptors, clad in formal clothes which were exaggerated black versions of their surgeon's gowns. They had bought a bloc of seats near the front of the auditorium, where the gigantic 3-V figures which would shortly fill the "stage" before them (the real singers would perform on a small stage in the basement) could not but seem monstrously out of proportion; but Strauss supposed that they had taken this into account and dismissed it.

There was a tide of whispering in the audience as the sculptors began to trickle in,

and with it an undercurrent of excitement the meaning of which was unknown to Strauss. He did not attempt to fathom it, however; he was coping with his own mounting tide of opening-night tension, which despite all the years he had never quite been able to shake.

The sourceless, gentle light in the auditorium dimmed, and Strauss mounted the podium. There was a score before him, but he doubted that he would need it. Directly before him, poking up from among the musicians, were the inevitable 3-V snouts, waiting to carry his image to the singers in the basement.

The audience was quiet now. This was the moment. His baton swept up and then decisively down, and the prelude came surging up out of the pit.

FOR A LITTLE while he was deeply immersed in the always tricky business of keeping the enormous orchestra together and sensitive to the flexing of the musical web beneath his hand. As his control firmed and became secure, however, the task became slightly less demanding, and he was able to pay more attention to what the whole sounded like.

There was something decid-

edly wrong with it. Of course there were the occasional surprises as some bit of orchestral color emerged with a different *klang* than he had expected; that happened to every composer, even after a lifetime of experience. And there were moments when the singers, entering upon a phrase more difficult to handle than he had calculated, sounded like someone about to fall off a tightrope (although none of them actually fluffed once; they were as fine a group of voices as he had ever had to work with).

But these were details. It was the overall impression that was wrong. He was losing not only the excitement of the premiere—after all, that couldn't last at the same pitch all evening—but also his very interest in what was coming from the stage and the pit. He was gradually tiring; his baton arm becoming heavier; as the second act mounted to what should have been an impassioned outpouring of shining tone, he was so bored as to wish he could go back to his desk to work on that song.

Then the act was over; only one more to go. He scarcely heard the applause. The twenty minutes' rest in his dressing room was just barely



enough to give him the necessary strength.

AND SUDDENLY, in the middle of the last act, he understood.

There was nothing new about the music. It was the old Strauss all over again—but weaker, more dilute than ever. Compared with the output of composers like Krafft, it doubtless sounded like a masterpiece to this audience. But he knew.

The resolutions, the determination to abandon the old clichés and mannerism, the decision to say something new—they had all come to nothing against the force of habit. Being brought to life again

meant bringing to life as well all those deeply-graven reflexes of his style. He had only to pick up his pen, and they overpowered him with easy automatism, no more under his control than the jerk of a finger away from a flame.

His eyes filled; his body was young, but he was an old man, an old man. Another thirty-five years of this? Never. He had said all this before, centuries before. Nearly a half century condemned to saying it all over again, in a weaker and still weaker voice, aware that even this debased century would come to recognize in him only the burnt husk of greatness—no; never never.

He was aware, dully, that the opera was over. The audience was screaming its joy. He knew the sound. They had screamed that way when "*Day of Peace*" had been premiered but they had been cheering the man he had been, not the man that "*Day of Peace*" showed with cruel clarity he had become. Here the sound was even more meaningless: cheers of ignorance, and that was all.

He turned slowly. With surprise, and with a surprising sense of relief, he saw that the cheers were not, after all, for him.

They were for Dr. Barkun Kris.

KRIS WAS standing in the middle of the bloc of psi-sculptors, bowing to the audience. The sculptors nearest him were shaking his hand one after the other. More grasped at it as he made his way to the aisle, and walked forward to the podium. When he mounted the rostrum and took the composer's limp hand, the cheering became delirious.

Kris lifted his arm. The cheering died instantly to an intent hush.

"Thank you," he said clearly. "Ladies and gentlemen, before we take leave of Dr. Strauss, let us again tell him what a privilege it has been for us to hear this fresh example of his mastery. I am sure no farewell could be more fitting."

The ovation lasted five minutes, and would have gone another five if Kris had not cut it off.

"Dr. Strauss," he said, "in a moment, when I speak a certain formulation to you, you will realize that your name is Jerom Bosch, born in our century and with a life in it all your own. The superimposed memories which have made you assume the mask, the *persona* of a great composer will be gone. I tell you this so

that you may understand why these people here share your applause with me."

A wave of assenting sound.

"The art of psi-sculpture—the creation of artificial personalities for aesthetic enjoyment—may never reach such a pinnacle again. For you should understand that as Jerom Bosch you had no talent for music at all; indeed, we searched a long time to find a man who was utterly unable to carry even the simplest tune. Yet we were able to impose upon such unpromising material not only the personality, but the genius of a great composer. That genius belongs entirely to you—to the *persona* that thinks of itself as Richard Strauss. None of the credit goes to the man who volunteered for the sculpture. That is your triumph, and we salute you for it."

NOW THE ovation could no longer be contained. Strauss, with a crooked smile, watched Dr. Kris bow. This psi-sculpturing was a suitably sophisticated kind of cruelty for this age; but the impulse of course, had always existed. It was the same impulse that had made Rembrandt and Leonardo turn cadavers into art-works.

It deserved a suitably so-

phisticated payment under the *lex talionis*: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—and a failure for a failure.

No, he need not tell Dr. Kris that the "Strauss" he had created was as empty of genius as a hollow gourd. The joke would always be on the sculptor, who was incapable of hearing the hollowness of the music now preserved on the 3-V tapes.

But for an instant a surge of revolt poured through his bloodstream. *I am I*, he thought. *I am Richard Strauss until I die, and will never be*

Jerom Bosch, who was utterly unable to carry even the simplest tune. His hand, still holding the baton, came sharply up, though whether to deliver or to ward off a blow he could not tell.

He let it fall again, and instead, at last, bowed—not to the audience, but to Dr. Kris. He was sorry for nothing, as Kris turned to him to say the word that would plunge him back into oblivion, except that he would now have no chance to set that poem to music.



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One definition of a psionic machine might be: a machine that shouldn't work, but does. Fine. But what do you do when you're depending upon this machine, and it suddenly becomes a machine that should work, but doesn't?

THE SABOTEUR

by RANDALL GARRETT

(author of "Code in the Head")

illustrated by ESMH

NEARLY four thousand million miles from Sol, floating powerless in the vacuum of space, hung the winged, needle-pointed body of the Skyhopper. It had been there for six days, solitary and unmoving against the sparkling backdrop of stars. Far astern, a single star, brighter than the rest, glittered in the blackness.

Inside, Captain Chester Bell chewed at his knuckles and glared at the great green tube of the Remshaw Drive Unit. He was a big man, six-two and barrel-built, like Bashan's Bull. His face was too broad and chunky to be called handsome, and the scowl that pulled the heavy brows down over his brown

eyes made him look more ferocious than he really was.

"Penson," he said, without looking around at the man behind him, "are you *sure* you've tested everything?"

The smaller man at his back shrugged. "I've done everything I know how. I'll swear that thing is in perfect working order. Of course, if Remshaw were here..." He let his voice trail off. Remshaw had designed the Unit, and if anyone had ever known why it worked—not *how*—it had been Remshaw. And Remshaw was dead.

Captain Bell dropped his hand from his mouth and looked unseeing at the knuckles he had been chewing. "Lilli said it would happen," he said softly.



"Sir?" said Penson.

"Never mind." Bell swung around and looked at the electronicist. "Give it another going over—a complete check; I want you to be *twice* as positive. I'll be in the control room when you've finished."

He turned and walked out of the drive room.

PENSON took a deep breath and exhaled through relaxed lips, making a sound like a muffled outboard engine. "Damn!" he said. Then, after a pause: "I suppose it's about all there is to do."

A third man was leaning against the metal-encased

atomic generator several feet away. He had said nothing while the captain was in the drive room; now that Bell was gone, a sardonic smile moved across his face. "*Lilli said it would happen*," he quoted.

Penson was busy checking his instruments. He looked up, grinning. "Wha'd you say, Harry?"

The lean, dark-haired man pushed himself away from the generator. "Boy, you're a good fellow, but you just don't listen. '*Lilli said it would happen*.' That's what the Skipper said. And I'll bet you *my* next year's pay against what you have in *your*

pocket that that's what's bothering him."

Penson's face darkened. "Lieutenant Nelder, if you meant that as a crack against Captain Bell or his wife, I'll thank you to keep your mouth shut."

Harry Nelder's face lost its grin, but the sardonicism still lit his eyes. "I'm sorry, sir; you know I didn't mean it that way."

Penson went back to his work. "You're a woman-hater, Harry," he said, without looking up. "A dyed-in-the-wool misogynist."

Nelder's grin came back, but he said nothing to Lieutenant Commander Penson.

"And no amount of woman-hating," Penson went on, "is going to get us out of a jam like this. We may have to depend on Commander Bru-maker."

Nelder nodded; this time both the grin and the glint in his eyes were gone.

FOUR MEN aboard a ship—a ship that shouldn't have worked, but did, and should have worked, but didn't. It shouldn't have worked because psionics can't be explained by physics. Any physicist can tell you that you can't go from *here* to *thete* instantaneously.

But the human mind is capable of incredible impossibil-

ities. Harnessed and controlled by the mind, common matter and energy can be forced into impossible configurations, made to do impossible things.

Forced? Perhaps that's not the right word. Induced? That's a little closer. No human being can *force* a lion to sit up on a chair, open his mouth, and keep it open while a hand or a head is stuck in it. But the lion can be *induced* to do so. Fear plays a part, perhaps; but nevertheless, it can't be done without the co-operation of the lion.

Matter and energy work the same way for the human mind.

And thus, the psionic machine. The human mind, plus the proper electromagnetic equipment, plus—something else?—and you have the miracle.

That had been the essence of Remshaw's genius. Nervous, enigmatic Edmond Remshaw, the quiet egotist who couldn't make a single one of his machines work, but who had a genius for picking men who could.

Dowsing rods? Remshaw could pick his dowser and then build a machine that would dowse for that one man—and him alone. Other fantastic gadgets, ditto.

The Remshaw Space Drive had been his crowning glory. A teleportation machine which, he had claimed, could be mass produced and attuned to the mind of the men who piloted a spacecraft. And thus, after half a century of interplanetary space travel, Man at last had the interstellar drive.

The first one had been attuned to the mind of Captain Chester Bell, United States Navy, Space Division.

FOUR MEN aboard a ship. All of them were worried and one of them was shocked.

Captain Bell sat at the controls of the first interstellar ship—the *Skyhopper*—his control helmet on his head, and stared at the star-studded blackness beyond. Six days. Six days, and nothing had happened. He thought back. What had happened after that first jump? What had happened *before* it?

The first extra-solar jump had been aimed for...

"...for Alpha Centauri, naturally. It's the closest, and it's damned near become traditional," said Captain Bell.

The three other members of the crew grinned at him there in the briefing room. They'd all known where they'd be going, but they'd

had to wait until the top Naval brass had come to their ponderous decision.

Bell grinned back at the three men before him: Lieutenant Harold Nelder, navigator; Lieutenant Commander James Penson, electronicist and communications officer; Commander Daniel Brumaker, mathematician and second-in-command. The four of them had been together since the first test of Remshaw's Drive, the first time that Chester Bell had put on the control helmet, looked at Mars, and thought: *There!* And, with no time lag, no sense of motion, no sensation whatsoever, the ship found itself near the orbit of Phobos. For eight months, the *Skyhopper* had flashed back and forth across the limits of the Solar System, getting the bugs out of both the electronic part—the huge Remshaw Tube—and the psionic part—the mind of Captain Chester Bell.

And now they were ready for the Big Jump!

HARRY NELDER said solemnly: "Fortunately, I have the course carefully plotted, having anticipated that it would be one of the nearby stars." He stood up. "If m'lord Captain would permit?"

"You may demonstrate, Sir Harry," Bell said.

Nelder walked up to the blackboard, his lean, olive-tan face perfectly straight—which was, in itself, suspicious.

He picked up a piece of chalk and made a dot in the exact center of the board. "Sol," he said smoothly. Then he began to make other dots around it. "Sirius, Altair Goombridge 1830, 61 Cygni, Procyon, Lacaille 9352, Barnard's Star..." By this time everyone was laughing since the dots were being placed in a haphazard way around the central dot; Nelder was paying no attention to the actual distribution of the stars in Sol's neighborhood. "...Proxima Centauri, Alpha Centauri, and..." He placed a final, decisive dot. "...S Doradus."

They all laughed again; S Doradus is eighty thousand light years from Sol.

"Now obviously," Nelder continued, without changing his expression, "the straightest line between two points is a short distance. Since we only want to travel a short distance, we must use the straightest line." He drew a line from Sol to Alpha Centauri. "After much calculation, we discover that this is it. As a matter of fact that

line is so straight that the distance is so short that we can go from here to there instantaneously, I thank you." He bowed and sat down.

BELL WAS laughing so hard that it took him a full minute to regain control of his voice. Finally, he said: "I'm sure we all sympathize our colleague. He feels that we have no need of a navigator to get us to our destination—which, of course, is perfectly true."

Penson stood up. "He's like the Filalooloo Bird. He doesn't know where we're going, but he can tell where we've been."

There was another burst of laughter, with Nelder's the loudest of all.

Penson's remark was close if not absolutely accurate. The navigator's job was to check the stellar configurations *after* the space-hop, in order to determine the new position of the ship.

"Well, after telling you something you all knew," Bell continued. "I'll just make a few closing remarks."

"We are not—repeat: *not*—to land on any planet of the Centauri system. We're to go, make a survey, and return. No funny business."

"Penson will send a tight-beam message to Earth in

order to time the pickup of the message four years from now. That will help us in determining the exact distance from here to Alpha."

"In case anything happens to me, Brumaker will pilot the ship."

NO ONE said anything, but they were all thinking the same thing. Presumably, the Remshaw Tube had been designed to respond to Dan Brumaker's mind, too. They could all hear the ghostly voice of Remshaw saying: "*Bell and Brumaker are a lot alike topside. If you can't pilot the ship, Bell—that is, if you're killed or knocked out—Dan can take over.*"

But it hadn't worked that way. Brumaker's accuracy was off; every time Bell had let him take over, the space-hops were erratic. Dan Brumaker would often under-shoot the target by a million miles or so, or overshoot it or come out way off to one side. Every time, Bell had had to take over, in order to get the ship close enough to set her down on her rockets.

Still, it had to be Commander Brumaker or nobody. No one else could even get a flicker out of the Remshaw Tube. The Navy wanted desperately to find out why, but—Remshaw was dead. Shortly after the first trials of the

Skyhopper, the screaming, rending smash of an automobile accident had caved in that lofty-browed skull crushing the brilliant, enigmatic brain within.

To break the awkward silence, Bell said: "That's all, boys. Preparation begins tomorrow. Anybody want coffee?"

THEY ALL went down to the Ship's Store and pulled up chairs around a table. Nelder went to the counter, got four cups of coffee, and distributed them around the table. He sat down and glanced at Brumaker.

The Commander was a heavy-set man; quiet, pleasant, and a fine mathematician. He didn't have the leadership, the hard, driving power of Chester Bell; but he was somehow friendlier and more genial than the Captain.

"How's Lilli, Chet?" he asked quietly.

Bell frowned. "Upset," he answered. "She doesn't want me to go; she says it's dangerous out there."

Penson smiled a little. "Women seem to be that way. You've been in the Navy for—how many years? Twelve?—and all that time, you've been gallivanting all over the Solar System in nuclear powered ships. She accepted that because it was old hat; but

now that you're trying something new, she doesn't like it."

Bell's eyes hardened. "She doesn't like it, no; but she knows I'll come through. Lilli's no weakling."

Penson said nothing; he looked down at his coffee.

Bell was the only one of the *Skyhopper's* crew who was married, but the other three knew Lilli; the Captain had acted as host to a good many get-togethers with his crew. The others lived in the Bachelor Officer's Quarters—small, compact rooms that were fine for living, but not much good for bull sessions or parties.

They all knew Lilli, a dark-haired, striking woman, with grey-green eyes, high cheekbones, and a wide, generous mouth. And they all liked her—even cynical, misogynistic Harry Nelder. She liked them, too; she was friendly, intelligent, and knew what the men were doing. She could speculate on the potentialities of the Remshaw Drive along with the rest of them.

NOT THAT she approved of it; far from it. The idea of men going to the stars seemed to be vaguely frightening to her, and Remshaw himself had seemed to upset

her equilibrium, somehow. Oddly enough, she had cried a little at the news of his death.

But there was only one man in her life: big, hard-eyed powerful Chester Bell. She not only loved him, she worshiped him. Bell knew it, and worshiped her, too, in his own way.

Possibly her coolness toward Remshaw had been his detached, analytical way of looking at her. He had an uncanny ability to detect psi-onic tendencies in others, although he had none himself—unless it was that very ability. But every time Lilli had exercised her "woman's intuition," he had eyed her coolly and nodded a little. She had prescience; she could see into the future, Remshaw claimed. He had been trying to get her to work with him on a machine that would do the job properly, but it was no dice with Lilli. A woman—especially a woman like Lilli—doesn't like to be looked on as a piece of a psi-onic machine; she wants to be recognized as a woman.

Nevertheless, everyone—with the possible exception of Harry Nelder—had a healthy respect for Lilli's hunches.

THE *SKYHOPPER* had blasted off from Earth the

next day. That was the way it had to work; nuclear powered rockets to get clear of the atmosphere, and then the Remshaw Drive to reach their destination. The drive simply wouldn't work in an atmosphere.

"I think there's a good, healthy reason for that," Remshaw had said. "I think it's the reason why teleportation is rare of Earth. Imagine what would happen if that ship just suddenly vanished from the field. It would leave a vacuum behind—a vacuum that would collapse with a hell of a clap of thunder and a hell of a shockwave.

"But, even worse, what would happen if it tried to materialize there? There have been a lot of stories written about how catastrophic it would be suddenly to materialize underground, but most of those writers never seemed to understand that air is a substance, too. Air has weight, mass, inertia, volume; it can't get out of the way; it has no previous warning. And I think the human mind knows that, and knows enough not to pull tricks like that. There's an automatic block against it."

So the *Skyhopper* had climbed heavenward on her searing, white hot jets until she reached the hard vacuum of space.

Once outside, the rockets were cut off. Captain Bell had put on the control helmet, looked at the bright, hard point of light that was the Alpha Centauri system, and thought: *There!*

And, seemingly, nothing had happened. Always before, when he had looked at a target and thought that driving thought, the planet had loomed large and bright before him—seeming to appear out of nowhere, as if it had been the target that moved, and not the ship.

But Alpha Centauri remained a shining pinpoint in the blackness ahead.

IT SOON became obvious that the ship *had* moved. Harry Nelder reported that the sun was far behind them, over three and a half billion miles behind. But a little jump like that means nothing in interstellar space; their target was, relatively speaking, no nearer than before.

Captain Chester Bell had tried again and again, but with no results. The tube refused to even flicker. It wasn't until the third day that someone suggested they try to get back to Sol; and it wasn't until the fourth day that Captain Bell had been willing to try it. But that hadn't worked, either; the

Remshaw Tube just sat there glowing greenly and smugly. Penson took the drive apart and put it together again. He replaced the main tube with the spare. He checked and rechecked the circuits. There was nothing wrong with the Remshaw Drive Unit—except that it didn't work.

By the time the sixth day rolled around, the tension within the ship was beginning to be almost palpably real.

Bell did some rough figuring in his head. With the nuclear drive, they could make eight gravities acceleration for ten hours. Final velocity: around seven hundred thousand miles per hour, if they drove for five hours and used the remaining half of the fuel to decelerate as they approached Earth. At that velocity, it would take better than nine months to get back to Earth.

There was food aboard for two weeks. On quarter rations, that could be extended to two months. One man, on quarter rations, might be able to make it; four men never would.

Bell could feel the tense-ness rise within him as the cold mathematical intractability of the situation became clear in his mind.

THE INTERCOM clicked then: "I've checked it again," came Penson's voice. It seemed both weary and apprehensive. "I'm ready to try any time you are."

"Check," said Bell. He adjusted the control helmet carefully and—*There!*

Nothing happened.

"Gyros," said Bell. "One-eighty degrees. Turn her over."

"Check."

The heavy gyroscopes began to spin, and slowly the ship turned over pointing her nose toward the sun.

Captain Bell looked at the brilliant, glowing star.

There!

The *Skyhopper* floated serenely in space, nearly four thousand million miles from Sol. Stubbornly, but quietly she refused to move.

Slowly, Bell pulled off the control helmet. He sat there for a long time, holding the silver and black helmet in his hands, looking, without seeing, at the traceries of metallic silver in the black plastic.

"Chet."

Bell blinked as he heard his name, and realized that Commander Brumaker had called his name at least twice.

"Oh. Yeah, Dan; what is it?"

"What are we going to do?" Brumaker asked softly. "We

can't just stay out here forever."

Bell carefully put the helmet on the control console. Then he looked up at Dan Brumaker. "I'm not sure," he said, his voice strained. "There's something wrong. But what?" There was another pause, then, decisively he punched a finger on the intercom button. "Nelder! Penson! Come on up to the control room!"

NELDER and Penson had been watching the green glow of the Remshaw Tube. That big, intricate four-foot vacuum tube was the sole indication of a space-hop. If you looked to one side of it so that the greenish light hit the rods instead of the cones of the retina, a definite flicker could be seen at the instant of the jump. Both men had held their breath for nearly a minute, watching, hoping.

Then Penson exhaled slowly. "No dice."

"Yea-a-a-ah," Nelder said letting out his breath as he spoke. "We're stuck."

Neither of them said anything more for a few minutes their eyes still hopefully on the tube.

Then came Bell's voice. "Nelder! Penson! Come on up to the control room!"

They looked at each other

then silently headed up toward the bridge.

Bell was standing in the middle of the transparent-domed control compartment, looking out at the far-distant brightness of the sun. As the two men entered, he turned slowly around.

"Do either of you have any suggestions? We've worked at this thing for six days, and so far, it looks hopeless. We can't beam a message home; and even if we could, there's not another ship like this one in existence. Do any of you have any suggestions?"

NELDER opened his mouth to say something, closed it again. Then, as though having finally made up his mind, said: "How about letting Commander Brumaker try it?"

Bell looked surprised, and the other three could almost read what was going on in his mind: *Brumaker? But if I can't do it, how could he?* Then the captain nodded.

"Very well. I should have tried it before."

"No reason to," Brumaker said. "If you can't handle this spook buggy, I sure as hell can't."

"Try it anyway," said Bell. He looked at Penson. "Is the Remshaw Unit still activated?"

Penson nodded. "You gave no orders to cut it."

Brumaker looked at Bell, then heaved himself out of his own seat and walked over to the captain's chair.

No one said a word as he sat down and picked up the control helmet. He stared at it for a few seconds, then adjusted it to his head.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Ready," said Bell.

Brumaker's eyes slitted in concentration.

And the sun vanished.

NELDER WAS the first to react, he turned and walked briskly into the navigation dome, while the others were still wondering what had happened. When they finally followed him, he was punching a last operator into the calculator.

"What is it Harry?" Captain Bell asked.

The navigation dome faced the rear of the ship. Nelder grinned a little and pointed a finger straight back along the hull, past the rocket tubes. "Recognize that constellation Captain?"

"It's The Centaur—and look how bright Alpha is!"

Nelder shook his head. "That's not Alpha Centauri; that's Sol. A few minutes ago, we were between Alpha and Sol; now Sol is between Al-

pha and us. I've just checked the distance. We've jumped clear across the Solar System; we're now thirty-nine point five AU—on the *other* side of the Sun!"

"I sort of overshot the mark again," said Brumaker ruefully.

Bell made up his mind. "Come on back in the control room, Brumaker. Nelder, you stay here and keep checking, we're going to try this again."

They did try it again. And again. And again.

And the results were invariably the same. No matter which direction they went, no matter where they aimed for the ship invariably ended up a little over three and a half billion miles from Sol.

"Why?" Bell asked. "Why? Is there a shell around the Solar System, or something?"

"We're at the very limits of the System," Penson pointed out. "We're somewhere near the orbit of Pluto; no one has ever been out this far before."

Bell rubbed the back of his hand over his brow. "We're not getting anywhere," he said, "but at least we've made some small amount of progress. We can at least *move* this bucket. What do you say we all get some sleep and try to tackle it in the morning when we're fresh?"

IN SPITE of its size, the *Skyhopper* was still cramped for four men. The bunkroom itself was eight feet long by eight feet wide by eight feet high. In this little cube were four bunks two on each side, one above the other. Penson and Nelder had the uppers, and Brumaker and Bell the lowers.

Big, easygoing Brumaker climbed into his bunk and was asleep within minutes. Bell tried to sleep, but after half an hour of tossing, he climbed out of bed and headed for the bridge. Lying awake in his bunk, Nelder could hear the footsteps of the captain moving up the metal corridors and the opening and closing of the hatch that led to the bridge.

"Penson?" he called softly.

"Yeah, Harry?"

"Something's bothering me."

"What?"

Nelder propped himself up on one elbow and looked at the Lieutenant commander in the dim light. "The distance. Why such an arbitrary distance? Why three billion, six hundred and seventy million miles?"

PENSON SHRUGGED. "Limits of the Solar System. That's the radius of Pluto's orbit isn't it?"

"Not exactly," Nelder said. "And that's what gets me. That figure is the *mean distance* of Pluto from the sun. But Pluto has a hell of an eccentric orbit. Back in 1989, it was at perhelion, and was closer to the sun than Neptune; in fact, it isn't much farther away now. In 2237, it'll be at aphelion, and a lot farther away from Sol than we are. Why consider this the limit of the System?"

"I'll bite. Why?"

Nelder lay back again. "I don't know yet; I've got to think about it."

"I hope you come up with something, Harry. I hope somebody—anybody—comes up with something. Another week of this, and we'll all be in damned bad shape; we'll wish we had a psychiatrist along."

"Yeah," said Nelder. "Yeah. Maybe that's just what we need."

Penson said nothing. Fifteen minutes later, he was breathing heavily and evenly.

Softly, Harry Nelder dropped to the floor from his bunk and padded out into the corridor in his bare feet. He went up to the bridge.

BELL WAS sitting in the control seat, looking out at the burning spark of Sol in the distance. When the

hatch opened he turned and looked at Nelder.

"Hello, Harry. Couldn't you sleep either?"

"Not a wink, Skipper."

"Cigaret?" Bell held out a pack. "Go ahead; it won't strain the conditioners too much."

Nelder took a cigaret and fired it up. There was a long silence, then: "Skipper?"

"Yeah, Harry?"

"Lilli said something would go wrong, didn't she?"

After a long minute, Bell nodded his big head slowly. "Yeah, Harry she did. She said it was dangerous to leave the Solar System; she said we'd never get back."

"And you went ahead, anyway?"

Bell turned savagely. "What else could I do? Back out? Tell the Navy I wouldn't go because my wife thought it was dangerous? There was no reason to think it was a jinxed ride; there was no way of knowing that there was an invisible wall around Sol that we can't break! What would the Navy think of that?"

And what would Lilli think? Nelder added mentally.

Bell turned back to the transparent dome and looked at Sol, so impossibly far away

"But Lilli said something would happen; she knew."

'Our Abudah chests,' Nelder quoted to himself, *'each containing a patent Hag who comes out and prophesies disasters, with spring complete are strongly recommended.'*

His hand took a firmer grip on the heavy wrench he was holding in the pocket of his robe.

"PENSON! Brumaker! Wake up!"

Jim Penson jerked out of his sleep as he heard Harry Nelder's voice. "What is it?" he asked blurrily.

Commander Brumaker swung his feet off his bunk. "What's the matter, Harry?"

"The Skipper," Nelder said. "He's hurt himself; come on."

Brumaker stood up and Penson slid to the deck from his upper bunk. They both followed Nelder on a double-time to the bridge.

Captain Chester Bell was lying on the deck, his head near the metal edge of the control panel.

Brumaker, in spite of his heavy build, got to Bell first. Before moving him he felt of him carefully. Then he looked up. "He's got a knot on the back of his head. How did it happen, Harry?"

Nelder spread his hands. "I don't know. I was in the nav-

igation room, and I heard him fall; I came out, and there he was."

Brumaker looked back at the fallen officer. "He must have slipped on the deck and cracked his skull."

"Cracked it?" Penson said sharply. "Fracture?"

"Figure of speech," Brumaker said quietly. "I don't think it's busted, but there may be a slight concussion. Let's get him down to the bunk."

The three men carried the two hundred pound body of their captain down to his bed and put him carefully in it.

"Whoo!" Penson said. "If we have to carry him again let's shut off the paragravity unit. He's heavy!"

"That's not too much of a bump on his head," Brumaker said. "He ought to be all right in an hour or so."

"That puts you in command, Dan," Nelder said quietly.

"I suppose so," Brumaker said. He rubbed his chin with his hand. "Well, my first—and probably my last—order as captain is: Let's go get some coffee. Jin, you stay here with the Skipper while Harry and I stir up some java."

WHEN THEY came back with the coffee, Penson

was looking worried. "Feel his face," he said.

Brumaker held his coffee in one hand and put the other on Bell's forehead. "Clammy," he said. "Shock, maybe."

"Or a very bad concussion," Penson countered. "At any rate, he belongs in a hospital."

"You want to carry him back to Earth piggy-back?" There was no real sarcasm in Brumaker's voice, only a sort of tiredness.

"You might try getting us back, Dan," Nelder said. "One more try wouldn't hurt anything."

Brumaker frowned. "I suppose not; we've got to do something. Harry, you stay here with the Skipper. Jim, get down below and warm up the Remshaw Unit; we'll make another stab at it."

Half an hour later, Commander Brumaker sat down in the control chair and put the helmet on his head. He looked at Sol and formed a mental picture of Earth in front of him.

There! he thought.

It was almost a shock to see the great, blue and green and brown globe of Earth looming large and sharp a thousand miles away.

THE SKYHOPPER had barely settled itself to the

surface of the Nevada spaceport when Lieutenant Harry Nelder stepped into the control room.

"Commander Brumaker," he said stiffly, "I'd like to speak to you before we leave the ship, or anyone comes in."

"It'll be several minutes before the ground cools," Brumaker said. "But why so formal, Harry?"

"Sir, I wish to place myself under arrest."

Brumaker blinked. "Arrest? What the hell for?"

"Striking a superior officer, sir. Maybe mutiny—I don't know."

Brumaker's eyes narrowed. "Sit down, Lieutenant, and tell me what this is all about. You slugged the Skipper?"

Nelder sat down. "Yes, sir I did. He's not hurt; I just tapped him gently and then filled him full of sodium amytal from the medical stores."

"Why, Harry?"

"So we could get back home. There was no other way."

"You'd better be a little clearer than that," Brumaker said coldly.

"**W**ELL, THE first thing that struck me odd was the distance. Limits of the Solar System! Hell, sir, that's a man-made distance. Strictly

speaking, there are no limits to the Solar System. Why there are comets which are part of Sol's family that have their aphelion point half a light year away from the sun—but they're still part of the System. As I pointed out to Jim Penson, even Pluto doesn't pay any attention to that phony limit; but people who aren't astronomers tend to think that way—even spacemen. We've never been out that far before, so we usually draw an imaginary line and say: *That's the limit.*

"Pluto's the outermost planet—so far as we know; it's mean distance is thirty-nine point five AU. So we tend to think of that as the Edge or something, but it's not.

"So whatever was stopping us at that point was using purely arbitrary human values. And who could that be but Captain Bell?"

Brumaker said nothing.

"Don't you see?" Nelder went on hurriedly. "The Skipper himself was stopping the ship at that point. Why? Because his wife, Lilli, had said something awful would happen if we left the System. *and the Skipper believed her!*

"So he subconsciously refused to take the ship beyond those limits."

"That wouldn't have kept

him from taking us home again," Brumaker said.

"He has a block there, too," Nelder said. "If he turned around and went back, he'd be a failure in his wife's eyes—at least, he thinks so. That woman treats him like a god and he doesn't want to break the illusion. He *couldn't* go back and admit failure. So we were stuck out there while his subconscious had a battle with itself."

BBRUMAKER shook his head. "If that's so, why couldn't I do any better?"

"That had me stumped for a while, too," Nelder admitted. "But then I remembered something Remshaw once said. *'If you can't pilot the ship, Bell; that is if you're killed or knocked out, Dan can take over.'*

"And that's just what he meant! You weren't supposed to control the ship while the Skipper was conscious; he'd throw you off every time, because the Tube was attuned primarily to him. That's why you couldn't do any better than jump us back and forth across the System; that's why you always missed your target. But when he was out cold, you hit Earth perfectly the first time.

"I had to hit him. There was nothing else I could do."

Brumaker sat for a long time, looking at his fingernails as though they were actually interesting. At last, he looked up at Nelder and said: "So it was all Lilli's fault?"

"I think so, sir. That female sabotaged his mind; she put him in a dilemma he couldn't get out of."

"Did you ever stop to think, Harry, that the accident she foresaw might be that very blow on the head?"

Nelder's face turned white. "No." The word was almost a whisper.

"That might have been the right way to handle it, Harry; and then again, maybe it wasn't." He paused. "I'll tell you what I'm going to do, Harry. We'll wait until the Skipper comes around again. I won't say a word to anyone until then. When he's awake, you and I will go in and tell him; after that, it's up to him.

"What do you think, Harry?"

Lieutenant Nelder nodded slowly. "That's fine, sir. Fine."

But he wasn't at all sure.



THE STONE OF THE WISE

ARTICLE

by the author
of "The Mythological Background"

by L. SPRAGUE de CAMP

THE PSEUDO - SCIENCE of alchemy once an important element of our civilization, is now only a glittering historical curiosity served by but few modern magicians. Yet its long and instructive history is closely connected with that of magic, and its language and concepts survive in modern occultism.

Alchemy, which paralleled chemistry much as astrology did astronomy, probably arose in the eastern Mediterranean in Roman times. Later it flowered in the Islamic world and in medieval Europe, but with the scientific revolution it split off from chemistry proper and slowly declined as the great chemical discoveries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries undermined its position.

Well, just what was alchemy? A philosophy, - an art, and (its practitioners thought) a science. As a philosophy it dealt with the nature of matter; as a science it formulated laws governing the changes in material substances; as an art it was carried on with furnaces, vessels and reagents as was chemistry.

But alchemy differed from chemistry in two ways. First, it was based upon magical concepts of the analogistic universe, full of sympathetic forces and occult connections. Secondly, while chemistry studies the behavior of matter for a vast variety of industrial and medical

purposes, alchemy narrowly pursued the secrets of changing base metals into gold and of making the Elixir of Life to confer health and immortality. Some alchemists even sought the alkahest or universal solvent, though the smarter ones asked: what would you put in it if you got it?

TO BEGIN operations, the alchemist needed a sample of *prima materia* or "first matter." This was variously identified with mercury, gold salt, vinegar, air, fire, blood, cloud, sea, Venus, dragon, moon, shadow, theriac, Goose of Hermogenes, and many other real and fancied substances. An alchemical recipe reminds one of the magical chain Gleipnir of Norse myth, forged by the dwarfs out of the breath of fishes, the foot-falls of cats, the beards of women, and other improbable substances.

Then the alchemist undertook his *magnum opus*, a series of chemical manipulations, usually based upon some biological or mythological analogy. The alchemist who wrote under the name of Morienus taught that to obtain the Philosopher's Stone for transmuting metals there had to be coitus (in a chemical sense), conception, pregnancy, birth, and nutrition

Generations of alchemists tried in all seriousness to stimulate these events. Others believed that to transform a metal into gold, it had to be "killed," "buried," and "resurrected."

Most alchemists used a clay reverberatory oven called an athanor or "philosophical egg," together with retorts and other legitimate chemical apparatus. They paid much attention to changes in color and sought a process that would carry their material through a sequence of three colors: black ("Crow's Head," symbolizing putrefaction) white (indicating the lesser Stone) and red (indicating the perfect Stone).

The Philosopher's stone, the objective of all this activity was a substance which, "projected" or sprinkled on molten metal, would turn that metal into silver or, if the Stone were of the highest grade, into gold. The Stone was also called the Tincture, the Grand Magisterium, the Quintessence, the Stone of the Wise, the Universal Essence, the Thirnian Stone, the Hyle, or the Carbunculus. Those who claimed to have seen it usually described it as a powder, generally red but sometimes of another color. The power of the Stone to transmute was estimated at as

much as a million times its own weight.

HAVING GOTTEN his Stone, the alchemist could use it to transmute base metals or, by dissolving it in alcohol, to make the *elixir vitae*, the Elixir of Life, by which he could cure all ills, rejuvenate himself and prolong his life. Elixirs for these purposes have been developed in various societies: a Chinese emperor is said to have died from drinking such a concoction.

Some of the recipes were fantastic to say the least. The early alchemist Theophilus proposed to make gold as follows: Imprison and feed two cocks until they copulate and lay. The resulting eggs must be brooded by toads fed on bread. (Toads do not eat bread.) These eggs produce normal-looking chicks which are, however, really basilisks and which grow snakes' tails and burrow out of sight unless kept on a stone floor. Put these basilisks in underground brazen vessels for six months, during which time they are nourished by "subtle earth" which enters through the holes in the vessels. Then roast the vessels and mix the remains of the basilisks with vinegar, copper, and human blood to make gold.

A determined alchemist might spend years distilling and redistilling mercury. He thought that to obtain the Philosopher's Stone he had to start with the Mercury of the Philosophers, which could only be refined from common mercury by repeated distillation. So he repeated the operation over and over until his funds ran out or the fumes killed him.

Or he might roast molten lead until it all evaporated, leaving a tiny lump of silver to begin with. But the alchemist, not knowing this, would think he had done at least a second-rate transmutation.

Chemistry was slower than most sciences to free itself from pseudo-scientific associations. The reason was that the laws of chemistry are so complex and interdependent that, in formulating these laws, you must hit upon the right scheme almost all at once, instead of proceeding in normal scientific fashion from the simpler problems to the more complex. Moreover chemistry is concerned with the behavior of atoms and molecules and, since you can't see atoms and molecules, you have to infer their existence and behavior from other facts.

MEDIEVAL EUROPEAN alchemists believed that

alchemy had been invented by Tubal-Cain, Noah, or some such patriarch and passed down by Solomon, Hermes Trismegistus, Osthanes Demokritos, and other adepts, some of whom never lived and the rest of whom had nothing to do with alchemy. Thus Hermes Trismegistus is a combination of the Greek messenger-god Hermes and the ibis-headed Egyptian god of wisdom, Tehuti or Thoth, metagrobolized into a mortal king of Egypt who lived about the time of the Flood and wrote 36,525 books on alchemy.

Actually, alchemy developed from two main roots: the speculations of Classical philosophers about the nature of matter, and the techniques of Mediterranean metal-smiths and other industrial artisans.

A few Ionians, or Asiatic Greeks, began philosophical speculations about matter in the sixth century B. C. Some of them thought that the universe around them was made of a single primal matter, of which all the familiar substances were modifications. Thales of Miletos suggested that the "first principle" was water; Anaximenes, that it was air; Herakleitos, that it was fire or change; Pythagoras, that it was number.

As these guesses left nobody much the wiser, the next formula tried was that the universe was made of a few simple substances. Empedokles of Agrigentum, the fifth-century B.C. Siceliot-Greek philosopher, advanced the classical element-theory of antiquity: that there were four elements—earth, water, air, and fire.

THIS EMPEDOKLES was a versatile fellow whose accomplishments were exaggerated into legends. Though rich and pompous, he was an influential democratic politician who liberalized the constitution of his city. He wrote plays and poems, and addressed his fellow-townsmen thus:

O friends, who dwell in the
mighty city which slopes
To the yellow Acragas down,
by the lofty keep
With works of virtue occu-
pied, all hail!
Among you as an immortal
god I go,
No more a mortal; duly hon-
ored by all
With fillets and flowery gar-
lands...

Modesty was evidently not a vice with him. Anyway, he taught that these four elements, mixed in various pro-

portions, give all the familiar substances:

The four roots of all things
first do thou hear—
Fire, water, earth, and aether's
boundless height:
For of these all that was, is,
shall be, comes...

In the following century Aristotle complicated this picture by adding a fifth element, *aither* or ether, an imaginary pure high-altitude air. He also analyzed the elements into combinations of four fundamental qualities: heat cold dryness, and wetness. Thus fire was hot and dry, air hot and wet, and water cold and wet. Classical scientists spent much of their time and thought in juggling these qualities, producing a body of theory notable for ingenuity influence, and complete uselessness.

THE OTHER root of alchemy was the Egyptian art of counterfeiting—or, to take a kinder view, making cheap alloys that looked like gold and silver.

Egypt has produced wonderfully skilled artisans and jewellers from the early dynasties to the present, and the art of imitating precious metals had been stimulated by the discovery of mercury about the third century B.C.

It was found, for instance that a good *ersatz* gold can be made by combining silver arsenic, and sulfur. Later philosophers who read of these metallurgical feats wondered whether the Egyptians hadn't really made gold, since the alloy looked like gold and a metal's appearance was deemed one of its most essential qualities.

Pliny the Elder said that Emperor Gaius Caligula made a little gold by heating arsenic sesquisulphide, but concluded that the method was impractical. After this early reference to gold-making come several fragmentary works on alchemy from the first seven centuries of our era, published under the names of (pseudo-) Demokritos, Synesios, Zosimos Olympiodoros, and Stephanos. These early references point to vigorous alchemical activity in Roman times, centering in Egypt.

With the decline of the Roman Empire, alchemy spread. It flourished in the Byzantine Empire and the Caliphate. However, of the many treatises that have come down from this period, most are so full of magic, mystery and amphigory as to be practically unintelligible. One reads:

A serpent is stretched out

guarding the temple. Let his conqueror begin by sacrifice, then skin him, and after having removed his flesh to the very bones, make a stepping-stone of it to enter the temple. Mount upon it and you will find the object sought. For the priest, at first a man of copper, has changed his color and nature and become a man of silver; a few days later, if you wish, you will find him changed into a man of gold.

How much good would this do a practical chemist setting out to make gold?

THE REAL pioneer of Muslim alchemy was Abu Musa Jabir ibn-Hayyan whom Europeans called Geber. He lived about the eighth century and revived the almost forgotten experimental methods of Archimedes and other Hellenistic scientists. Of the many Arabic works attributed to him, some are adaptations of Greek alchemical works. Others show considerable chemical knowledge such as the preparation of lead carbonate and the reduction of arsenic and antimony from their sulphides. About 200 medieval Latin works were ascribed to Jabir, but most of these were mere pseudepigrapha written under

Jabir's name for reasons of prestige.

Jabir probably originated the hypothesis that all substances were compounds of sulfur and mercury. This theory partly replaced Empedocles' four-element hypothesis. But Jabir's sulfur and mercury were not the ordinary substances known by these names. His Sulfur (we capitalize it to distinguish it from common sulfur) was the "principle" of combustibility and color, while his Mercury or Azoth was the principle of liquidity and luster. Thus gold and silver were nearly pure Mercury. Like the Greeks, Jabir tended to confuse things with qualities. Other alchemists added a third principle, Arsenic or Salt, the "principle of solidity."

With the decline of the Caliphate as a result of the Turkish invasions in the tenth and eleventh centuries the intellectual center of Islam shifted from Baghdad to Spain, and thence alchemy spread to Western Europe. From the eleventh century on Europeans read translations of Arabic alchemical manuscripts and decided to become alchemists themselves. Many wrote their own treatises under the names of their Muslim predecessors or, later, under

the names of distinguished European scholars like St. Thomas Aquinas.

THUS THERE grew up an immense and unreadable corpus of alchemical literature. The Byzantine and Arabic works had been heavily magical, telling of visions of the tail-biting snake Ouroboros (an old Egyptian magical symbol) and of the seven heavens of the planets. They invoke Hermes Trismegistos and affirm that the sages hide the secret of transmutation for fear of the anger of demons. Sometimes these works preserve the old Hellenistic-Egyptian counterfeiting formulas, but so distorted by repeated translations as to be scarcely recognizable.

The European alchemists followed this tradition. Their treatises had such flowery titles as *"The New Pearl of Great Price"*, *"The Triumphal Chariot of Antimony"* or *"An Open Entrance to the Closed Palace of the King"*. To hide their meaning from the "vulgar", they saw fit "to vaile their secrets with a mistie speech" by such code-names as "Royal and Magnificent Blood of a Gray Dove" for red lead and "Product of the Daughters of the Bulls of Athens" for honey. Paracelsus used "Red Lion" for gold and "Green Lion" for copper

sulphate. "Dragon's Blood" might be almost anything, even "real" dragon's blood since that rare substance was a commonplace of magical recipes.

THE SEVEN METALS were often called by the names of the planets: "Sun" for gold, "Moon" for silver, "Mars" for iron, and so on. Some alchemists devised symbols like those of astrology for their substances and illustrated their books with pictures full of kings, lions, dragons, naked people, skeletons, mountains, and other symbolic objects. Western alchemists achieved such masterpieces of obscurity as this:

But if you add to the Eagle the icy Dragon that has long had its habitation upon the rocks, and has crawled forth from the caverns of the earth, and place both over the fire, it will elicit from the icy Dragon a fiery spirit which, by means of its great heat, will consume the wings of the Eagle, and prepare a perspiring bath of so extraordinary a degree of heat that the snow will melt away upon the summit of the mountains, and become of water, with which the invigorating mineral bath may be prepared, and fortune, health, life, and strength restored to the King.

This special jargon might have been helpful had there been a Society of Alchemical Engineers to standardize the terms. As there wasn't, the number of symbols increased with each new treatise, running into the thousands. Alchemists sometimes began their tracts with protests against the "obscure and allegorical style" of their colleagues, and then went ahead to write as cryptically as their predecessors.

ONE OF the most celebrated pieces of alchemical writing, the "*Tabula Smaragdina*" or "*Emerald Tablet*," comprised a collection of aphorisms which goes back to early Muslim alchemy and perhaps farther. Medieval accounts tell how Alexander the Great found a slab of emerald inscribed with Phoenician characters in the tomb of Hermes in a cave near Hebron, reading:

1. I speak not fictitious things, but that which is true and most certain. 2. What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is like that which is below, to accomplish the miracles of one thing. 3. And as all things were produced by the mediation of one Being, so all things were produced from

this one thing by adaptation. 4. Its father is the Sun, its mother the Moon; the wind carried it in its belly, its nurse is the earth. 5. It is the cause of all perfection throughout the whole world. 6. Its power is perfect if it be changed into earth. 7. Separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, acting prudently and with judgment. 8. Ascend with the greatest sagacity from the earth to heaven, and then again descend to the earth, and unite together the powers of things superior and inferior. Thus you will obtain the glory of the whole world, and all obscurity will fly away from you. 9. This thing is the fortitude of all fortitude, because it overcomes all subtle things, and penetrates every solid thing. 10. Thus were all things created. 11. Thence proceeded wonderful adaptations which are produced in this way. 12. Therefore I am called Hermes Trismegistus, possessing the three parts of the philosophy in the whole world. 13. That which I had to say concerning the operation of the Sun is completed.

At least forty-eight books have been written to explain the "*Emerald Tablet*", but at best it expresses in a vague way the principles of sympathism and analogism that

underlie all sympathetic magic.

Besides their belief in the four Elements, the four Qualities, and the three Principles, the alchemists entertained the notion that metals grew from seeds in the earth like vegetables. Some thought that the heavenly bodies impregnated the earth, and that gold, for instance, was the child of the sun; tin, of Jupiter; and copper, of Venus. Others believed that Nature was trying to make the perfect metal, gold and that base metals were abortive or defective efforts in this direction. Or they thought that metals evolved changing from one to another and moving up the scale to gold. The alchemist's job was to synthesize gold by speeding this natural process.

There was some questions as to whether the end-product would be common gold or some mysterious new "Gold of the Philosophers," also called *ios* (Greek for "tarnish"). The idea of this supergold was based upon the appearance of a purplish or iridescent film on the surface of some alloys under certain treatments.

ACCOUNTS of dramatic discovery of magical books like the "*Emerald Tablet*" are a common feature of pseudepigraphic (falsely

attributed) works, especially those about occult matters. For instance, the alchemical treatise "*Concerning the Seven*" was said to have been discovered in the tomb of the mythical King Kyranides at Troy, while the "*Book of Images of the Moon*" turned up in a golden chest. The medieval practice of asserting that a book was received under mysterious circumstances, to lend it spurious authority, is an old custom that has not yet died out, as witness Madame Blavatsky's "Secret Doctrine" and Joseph Smith's "Book of Mormon".

Even when they did not resort to such melodramatics medieval alchemists commonly ascribed their books to long-dead famous men—even to those, like Raymond Lully whose authentic works show that they did not believe in alchemy.

THUS, AS astrology was analogistic astronomy, so alchemy was analogistic chemistry, full of religious mysticism, Neoplatonic symbolism, and thaumaturgic magic. Alchemists, working on the magical principle of "as above, so below," believed they were operating on the planes of matter and spirit at the same time. As men had spirits or souls, they believed, metals must have them too.

Following the laws of sympathetic magic, they thought that actions on the spiritual plane affected reactions on the material one. Hence they modelled their chemical processes on the Catholic Mass, or on the creation-myth of *Genesis*, or on the Crucifixion, or on the reproduction of organisms. They sought moral purity while trying to purify their materials, and tried hard to get their wives with child while "marrying" their Philosophical Sulfur and Mercury. With all these distractions and irrelevancies, it is not surprising that their findings were small for the effort expended.

They were also misled by their passion for gold, which men had originally chosen as their favorite money-stuff not for occult virtues but because of its rarity and chemical torpor. But because of its use as a medium of exchange, the alchemists looked upon it as a "perfect" or "noble" metal attributed magical properties to it, and even used it as a medicine, useless though it is for this purpose.

Obviously, if the alchemists had succeeded in making gold on a large scale they would have defeated their own ends by cheapening the metal. This inflationary possibility does not seem to have worried

them much, though Thomas Norton cautioned them not to reveal their secrets to the vulgar, lest some rascal thereby "remove from their hereditary thrones those legitimate princes who rule over the peoples of Christendom."

A FEW anti-alchemical laws were passed, but not to prevent inflation. The English law of 1404, for instance, made gold-making a felony because of the fear that the king might get his hands on the power and so become independent of Parliament. This act, however, soon fell into abeyance, and English patents or licenses were issued in the fifteenth century to "labor by the cunning of philosophy for the transmutation of metals with all things requisite to the same at his own cost, provided that he answered to the King if any profit grow therefrom." The pious Henry VI issued four such patents in 1544 to several priests and monks, reasoning that they, with their experience of transubstantiation of the Host at Mass, should be well fitted to change metals.

Laws against magic did not much affect alchemy because the men of that time considered alchemy science rather than magic. Alchemists were

not usually molested unless caught in fraud. But if they had little to fear from the law, they were liable to be seized by some greedy prince or noble in order to extort the secret of the Stone from them. In 1575 Duke Julius of Brunswick roasted a woman alchemist alive in an iron chair because she failed her promise to give him a gold-making formula.

IN ANOTHER case the fat Scottish alchemist Alexander Seton was said to have effected several transmutations, and the story got around. In 1602 Seton toured Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, eloping with the daughter of a citizen of Munich in the process. Then the Elector of Saxony summoned him to Dresden where, failing to wheedle his secret out of him, he had the alchemist jailed and tortured.

Then Michael Sendivog, a young Slavic alchemist living in Dresden, heard of Seton's plight. Sendivog sold some property in Krakow and used the money to bribe the guards to let him visit the prisoner. Seton promised Sendivog the secret of transmutation in exchange for his freedom. Sendivog got the guards drunk and spirited Seton away to Krakow, but Seton

reneged on his promise on the pretext that it would be sinful to disclose such awful Hermetic mysteries. When Seton died from the effects of the torture about 1603, Sendivog married his widow in hope she might have Seton's secret, but in this too he was disappointed.

Then Sendivog obtained the patronage of Emperor Rudolf II, who, though a haughty and unlikeable man with intervals of insanity, was an enthusiast for the sciences and pseudo-sciences and subsidized the astronomers Brahe and Kepler. Once an avaricious Moravian noble kidnapped Sendivog to wring his secrets from him. When Sendivog escaped and complained to Rudolf, the emperor confiscated the noble's estate and gave it to the alchemist.

Before he died in 1646 at 84, Sendivog had been councillor of state to four successive emperors. He revised and published some of Seton's manuscripts. In one of these in a dialogue between Mercury, Nature, and an Alchemist, Sendivog's disillusioned alchemist candidly admits:

Now I see that I know nothing; only I must not say so. For I should lose the good opinion of my neighbors, and



they would no longer entrust me with money for my experiments. I must therefore go on saying that I know everything; for there are many that expect me to do great things for them . . . There are many countries, and many greedy persons who will suffer themselves to be gulled by my promises of mountains of gold.

THE MOST dramatic incident in the biographies of alchemists is, of course, their successful transmutation of metal. In the commonest form of this story, the alchemist

after struggling without success for years, meets a mysterious stranger who gives him a small quantity of the Stone. With this the alchemist makes some gold, but when he goes to look for his benefactor, the adept has vanished.

One of the best-known of these tales concerns the Belgian savant Jean Baptiste van Helmont. This gifted physician of Brussels (1577-1644) performed notable work in physiology and chemistry and invented the word "gas". He was, however, a disorderly and superficial thinker, of whom it was said "He wanted to be learned in a brief time and easily and therefore rushed through all the sciences without lingering by any." The "nobility of character" his friends attributed to him did not stop him from claiming to possess the alkaliest, or from writing:

I am constrained to believe that there is the Stone which makes Gold, and which makes Silver; because I have at distinct turns, made projection with my hand, of one grain of the Powder, upon some thousand grains of hot Quick-silver; and the business succeeded in the Fire, even as Books do promise; a Circle of many people standing together with a tickling Admiration of us all . . . He who first gave me the Gold-making Powder, had

likewise also, at least as much of it, as might be sufficient for changing two hundred thousand Pounds of Gold: . . . For he gave me perhaps half a grain of that Powder, and nine ounces and three quarters of Quick-silver were thereby transchanged: But that Gold, a strange man, being a Friend of one evening's acquaintance, gave me,

Some decades later the Dutch physician Helvetius told an almost identical yarn about a mysterious "Artist Elias" who gave him a grain

of the Stone (which looked like yellow glass) wherewith he turned three ounces of lead to gold, but who went off on a pilgrimage to Palestine and was never seen again. As this tale occurs again and again with little variation, it was evidently borrowed by one biographer from another to pad his narrative. The mysterious stranger with the Stone, we can infer, never existed, and men like van Helmont can have fine reputations for honesty and still draw a long bow.



Adventures in Space and Time



Robert Randall, a name you'll remember, leads off the issue with a novelet you won't forget—

NO FUTURE IN THIS.



Robert Abernathy is author of the story from which Emsh painted the cover —
ONE OF THEM?



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THE SECRET WEAPON OF TITIPU

A FABLE OF FUTURITY

by RALPH SPENCER

illustrated by LUTON

IT WAS the Tee Vee hour in Titipu; it came every Sunday afternoon. Cow-hides were hung over all the otherwise-open doors of the Quonset huts that made up the city of Shington. Each family crouched on stumps and piles of grass along the walls, and in silence watched the dark square box with its single glass window.

There was an ancient legend that at one time pictures had formed on these glasses; great leaders had spoken to their people from the mysterious depths behind them. No pictures had appeared within the memory of any man now living, or of his father, or his grandfather; back of that, memory could not be expected to go.

After a while the crying of frustrated children in the darkness became almost unbearable, but they were sternly hushed. In some corners old men and women slept surreptitiously, each one, when awakening, prodding the others awake. In other corners lovers tittered and giggled and girls said half-heartedly, "Oh, behave!"

But no one protested the Tee Vee period. It was the law. Furthermore, it was only decent; the Tee Vee service had to last during at least the sixth part of the afternoon.

"**T**HEY GROW more restless in each generation," whispered the Oldest Inhabitant, slipping his sheepskin off his shoulders and under him to soften the stump on which he was seated in the largest hut. It was the Preservidential Chair, and there was such a special stump for him wherever he went—for he was Preservident of the Knightedstates of Merica. Always the Oldest inhabitant was Preservident, being obviously the best preserved of all men.

"They're tired," hissed the Preservident's son, the Secretary of Defense.

"Our Bishop told me only yesterday," rejoined the old

man in a toothless murmur, "that the wise ancients thought nothing of watching Tee Vee not only all Sunday afternoon, but seven or eight hours of every night."

"Maybe they had pictures in those days," grunted the Secretary of Defense.

"Our Bishop thinks the pictures resulted from proper reverence," reproved the elder, a trifle louder in the excitement of the friendly argument. "And I, myself, often rise during the night to revere the Tee Vee some additional time. I expect that some night the little window will glow with the scenes of the past, and I will see our founding fathers, the D'Oyley Cartes, climb out of the sacred caves of Airraidshelter in Providence, which means Heaven, and march to these Quonset huts, bringing not only our National Anthem with them, but the name of our country. The legends say the Tee Vee was here ready for them. They had only to clear away the bones of the ancients, whose zeal was so great that they had conducted the Tee Vee service until they died."

The Oldest Inhabitant paused as there came the sound of singing from Capitol Hill outside. He stretched

and rose. "The Anthem," he said.

With vast sighs of relief the people in the darkness of the Quonset huts pulled the cowhides from the doors and came out.

CAPITOL Hill was a knoll in the center of Shington. It was surmounted by a Quonset hut with half another superimposed on it to form what was called "The Dome." Nobody knew what its significance might be, but it had always been so—that the Capitol had a dome—as long as anybody, or his father, or his grandfather...and so on.

The Bishop of Titipu stood at the foot of the knoll, facing the square in front of it. He was an imposing figure, despite his scholarly stoop and scanty white hair. He attained part of his dignity by wearing an academic gown over his sheepskins. There were only a few of these vestments in Shington; they had been secured generations before from the great kitchen midden called "Brown," on the other side of Narragansett Bay, a day's journey eastward.

Behind the Bishop was the choir, wearing cowhide gowns modeled after his gown. They were lustily singing the National Anthem:

For where'er our country's
banner may be planted,
All other local banners are
defied!

Our warriors in serried ranks
assembled,

Never quail—or they conceal
it if they do—

And I shouldn't be surprised
if nations trembled

Before the mighty troops of
Titipu!

The song ended, the Bishop spoke a few well-chosen words on the Connecticut Valley heresy: "People of those parts, members of the Valley tribes, now call themselves variously 'Quakers' and 'Puritans': old words the meaning of which was forgotten as long ago as the atomic wars. But they give these words a new meaning by their interpretation of an Apocryphal tradition preserved among them.

"This tradition—or legend, I might say—sets forth the unorthodox thesis that our ancient capital was not here, in the Shington we have always known and which at one time was obviously a principal metropolis of Titipu, under its archaic name of Rhode Island. The heresy of the Valley tribes maintains that the capital of the Knightedstates was far to the south of the great Long Island Sound, where"

(He permitted himself one of his rare bits of humor) "no one has ever heard of an island. Therefore, say these Valley tribesmen, they owe no allegiance to our Shington, nor to the Knightedstates congress which sits here, and which has always ruled the Union of which Titipu has ever been the main support—and is now, I am sorry to say, almost the only support."

THE BISHOP looked around and saw the crowd was interested. Too interested; it was time to demolish the heresy: "This is all very nonsensical, but dangerous to the faith, and as is always the case with strange doctrines, treasonable as well. Consider: their legend refers in one case to their imaginary southern Shington as 'Washington', which they argue means that it was Shington—and our city, therefore, was not.

"Completely refuting this argument, we have in our archives a tattered chart issued under the seal of one 'Esso', clearly a most learned personage, probably a dignitary of the Church in the old days; and on it our Shington is specifically located in 'Rhode Island' and there is called"—he paused and his voice rose triumphantly — "'Washington'! Our city is really the

one that was Shington, and no doubt about it!"

The Bishop warmed to his discourse, disregarding a mutter behind him: "Old Bish never knows when to stop when he gets off on an academic dissertation. I'm hungry."

"The very legend by which the heretics abide mentions that Washington was the capital of the 'United States', which latter term they assume was the same as Knightedstates. Thus they display their ignorance; for in the old speech, the word or particle 'Un' nullified what followed it—so their boasted tradition contains internal evidence that it was not talking about the Knightedstates at all!"

THE CROWD pattered a little applause, though few persons present knew enough to get the point, and there was a milling and shuffling with individuals drifting away toward home.

The Bishop, well versed in the psychology of great multitudes, even up to several hundred strong, observed the restlessness, wiped the smile from his face and hurried to finish: "The agents of the Valley heresy, I am reliably informed by high officials of Security, are working amongst us, in a front organi-

zation called a peace party!"

"No peace with the Valley tribes of sheep stealers!" shouted some one from the choir.

A mingling of applause and booing came from the residents of Shington assembled in the square.

"Congress is ready to take a vote!" shouted a man in sheepskins, appearing for a moment in the door of the Capitol above them.

"Never mind the Anthem again," ordered the Bishop, running up the knoll. "That's a Senate page, and this I got to see; our Merican way of life is at stake."

The Bishop was hindered by the robe, which he paused to take off and hang over his arm; so he and the Defense Secretary and the Secretary's father reached the domed Quonset hut at the same time, and others interested in civic affairs crowded in behind them.

They nearly filled the gallery, which was a space separated from the Senate floor by a rail fence.

"Link", the "Hereditary Rail-splitter", sat on the fence strewing the floor inside with grass roots. Grass roots sentiment, as was known of old, aided the congressmen in their deliberations.

THE WHOLE congress met in the Senate chamber these days. Once there had been another chamber; but a hurricane demolished what had withstood even the ancient atom bombs, and as it was felt that dividing congress into two houses delayed legislation, they met together now.

The Senate floor had bundles of hay strewn around to furnish seats for the twenty senators and congressmen facing the Speaker who took the stump at the end of the hut.

Many of the legislators had bloodied heads, lumps showing under their tangled hair, and some carried their arms in slings. One senator had at his side a pair of rough crutches made from the forked limbs of trees.

"They must have been engaged in debate recently," said the Secretary of Defense.

The Preservident looked them over with appraising eyes. "The older members who inherited their positions have withstood the trials of public office best," he announced with satisfaction. "Most of the bruises are on those we sentenced to terms in Congress for drunken and disorderly conduct."

"Politics is a game of skill," the Bishop commented sagely.

They were interrupted by the Speaker, calling to order.

"An appropriations bill is on the floor for its third reading," the Speaker intoned. "It is to grant a continuance of the salary of one sheep a week to the Pentagon staff, for the specific purpose of ensuring that work on the secret weapon of Titipu is continued to a successful conclusion. The Chairman of the Appropriations Committee is recognized."

THE MAN alongside the crutches gathered them up, used them as a staff to assist him to rise, and stood leaning on them.

"Our fair land is in peril," he began in a rolling voice. "Leading a party of tax assessors into the Connecticut Valley yesterday, we collected some fifty ewes with lambs, only to have them treasonably wrested from us in an ambush which consisted of nearly a hundred clubs against our twelve. I recognized among the sheep several stolen from me by a raid the Valley tribes carried out a week ago. Every year they encroach further. I see no hope to establish once more the authority of these Knightedstates but by concentrating all our energies on preparedness, and in preparedness, our

expected secret weapon ranks first and foremost. We must at least draw an unmistakable line past which they shall not advance."

"Bunk!" yelled a mighty man with a bandaged head, leaping to his feet without waiting to be recognized.

"Does the Senator yield to this question?" asked the Speaker tactfully.

"He does!" shouted the interrupter, casually hurling a rock at the Speaker which caught him in the abdomen and bowled him over backward off the stump.

The stalwart man continued: "We don't need a new weapon if we just stop trying to collect taxes."

"Without taxes we can not maintain our government," screamed the Appropriations Chairman.

"This government is bunk," said the man with the bandaged head. "We don't need it. If we only do like the tribes—just have a chief and some sachems. And no sheep every week to the Pentagon staff—that's only one man, anyway, the Secretary of Defense."

"Heresy! That's the subversion of the western heresy!" cried the Bishop from the gallery.

The Speaker had resumed his stance on the stump, still holding one hand over his

stomach. "Both sides having stated their case, and the debate having therefore ended, are you ready to vote?" he groaned.

Everybody on the Senate floor leaped up, there was a flying shower of bundles of hay being tossed to the sides of the room.

THOSE SENATORS and congressmen who wore academic gowns took them off and folded them neatly on the bundles. Each of the lawmakers selected a club from the row that stood against the walls of the hut, and the two parties faced each other across the room. They were equal in strength.

"Cast your ballots!" ordered the Speaker and scrambled back out of the way.

With whoops of enthusiasm the government party and the peace party charged each other, and the melee began—so thick with flailing clubs and the air so blue with dust and profanity that it was difficult to distinguish the individual Solons.

"Order, order, order," chanted the Speaker in tune with the thwacking of clubs and howling of the congressmen.

The Speaker's chant trailed off to silence as the dust settled and all the congress was

seen sitting or lying on the floor, nursing bruises, except the Appropriations Chairman and the spokesman of the peace party. The Chairman seemed to have completely recovered his strength; and though forced back to the side of the hut, he guarded himself well with his club in his right hand, and repeatedly tripped his opponent with the crutches, which he held in his left hand.

"What a master of parliamentary law the Chairman is," said the Oldest Inhabitant with appreciation.

However, the leader of the peace party braced his feet far apart and with a series of heavy two-handed blows demolished the crutches and began to beat down the Chairman's guard.

"Our Merican way of life is in danger!" shouted the Oldest Inhabitant. "As Preservident, I shall veto!"

He leaped over the rail fence with that agility which demonstrated his right to his high office, picked up a bludgeon from the floor, and broke it over the head of the peace advocate—who went down and stayed there.

THE DEFENSE SECRETARY, the Bishop, and the Oldest Inhabitant were eating a stew of mutton cut

from the first dressed sheep delivered on the new appropriation. The rest of the sheep was still in the Pork Barrel, which, as an object of veneration and awe—the very symbol of good government—sat at the head of the table cloth spread on the floor of the Pentagon. The Pentagon was also a Quonset hut, but surrounded by a five-sided stone wall. The meal had been cooked over the forge which occupied the center of the hut.

"We nearly didn't get this sheep," observed the Preservident. "That vote was mighty close. I never veto without remembering that my grandfather lost his life that way. He stepped in while there was still a member of the opposition able to get up from the floor behind him. That was in the days before national unity was firmly established and there was still friction between the descendants of the D'Oyle Cartes and the offspring of the party of ancient senators and congressmen they found hiding here during the great destruction."

"A great man for ancient history your grandfather was," the Bishop said. "I remember he told me many legends of the great destruction and the secret weapons used on each side."

"YES," AGREED the Oldest Inhabitant, pronging a fresh bit of mutton on a pointed stick and holding it over the forge fire to roast. "He wasn't of a mechanical turn of mind, poor fellow, or we might have had our secret weapon without all this trouble. He knew his books—in his day he had several, all gone now. But he emphasized that the secret weapons of the ancients, called variously 'atom bombs', 'hydrogen bombs', and 'cobalt bombs' were able to penetrate any defense—and therefore, apparently, could pierce any sheepskin pad, even one that successfully cushioned the wearer against ordinary cudgels. He also thought the ancients' weapons destroyed all their huts except this group here. Our capital," he added, as a dutiful afterthought, "So our side must have won, we still have Shington."

"I recollect he thought the great kitchen middens at Providence and Pawtucket were the remnants of old dwellings," said the Bishop.

"Now that, I am sure, is wrong," interposed the Secretary of Defense, diffidently, because he did not like to argue with the Bishop.

"I have been working on weapons for quite a while, as

you know, and if I seem rather brusque and impolite, put it down to excitement, for my work is just achieving results."

THE DEFENSE SECRETARY waited until the astonishment faded from their faces, then continued: "In regard to secret weapons, you can take my word, as something of an expert, there is none that will destroy huts. My task, you see, was simply to do as well as the ancients, and find one that would cut through sheepskins that can stop a club. As for the kitchen middens, it is my opinion that those heaps of crumbled rock and scraps of the strange hard stone popularly known as 'steel' are neither refuse dumps nor of course, remnants of dwellings."

"Oh, I never agreed with my grandfather that they could have been dwellings," interposed the Preservident hastily. "Not shaped like a Quonset hut, nor even like the dugouts of the western tribes."

"Quite right," observed the Bishop. "But why not just dumps?"

"Because of the prevalence of steel," answered the Defense Secretary, still polite. "What domestic purpose

could that stuff have served, that its outworn pieces, in such strange shapes, should have been thrown away? No, it is my contention that these heaps are the waste piles from an enormously prolific manufacture of the secret weapons of the ancients!"

"A remarkable bit of archaeological research, as your great grandfather would have said."

"Son, you may be right," the Oldest Inhabitant declared. "You sought amidst these—well, waste heaps—for the secret of their weapons?"

"I did, indeed, father," said the Defense Secretary proudly, "and found a way to shape steel!"

"But what shape?" asked the Oldest Inhabitant.

"Oh, I see!" the Bishop broke in with animation.

"Like the jawbone of an ass! One of our religious stories is about a large number of warriors slain with the jawbone of an ass by a hero named Sam, or the son of Sam. I always wondered over that; didn't seem an efficient weapon. But if the remark was allegorical, symbolic, for the cobalt bomb, say..."

"Doubtless you are right, but I didn't know, and worked along a different line," said the Defense Secretary, with a

certain smugness. "And now the weapon is ready—but, as is traditional, kept under wraps pending legislation for a new appropriation."

HE LEAPED across the hut, reached under a pile of straw in the corner of the Pentagon, and brought out the weapon.

The other two were profoundly impressed. The Preservident reached to touch it, and bright red drops sprang out on his hand where he contacted it.

"Tremendously powerful," said the old man, sucking his fingers. "It must be either the cobalt bomb, or the hydrogen bomb you have re-discovered."

"I am just a little worried over a moral problem," said the clergyman. "Have we the right to loose such means of destruction upon the world? Think of the loss of human life."

But the Oldest Inhabitant clapped his son on the shoulder. "Won't have to kill many! It's mere possession makes us invulnerable. We'll set up the authority of the Knightedstates government over the Cape Codders first, and everything east of Narragansett Bay. Then with our rear secure, we'll lick the Connvalley tribes."

"Anyway the tribes have placed themselves outside the

consideration of civilization," agreed the Bishop.

"We'll go right on," declared the Secretary of Defense, fired by the prospect of absolute victory. "We'll bring in everybody—if there is anybody—clear to the Berkshires, and beyond those mountains, if there is any land beyond them."

"Hold up, Son," cautioned the Oldest Inhabitant. "Just a world war is big enough. Can't be any land beyond the Berkshires; Grandfather never heard of anything there. The world ends there."

"I'd like to name my weapon," said the Secretary of Defense. He blushed. "I feel that this is a prophetic, historic occasion, and one suited to poetry."

"Poetry!" ejaculated the Bishop, who had been musing. "Song! That's it! As keeper of written archives and oral saga, I remember a picture of this very type of atom bomb, and choruses and minstrel lay which repute that it was for countless aeons of time the most deadly of all the machinery of war. Yes, it has a name, it needs but to dub it anew."

He solemnly put on his gown, and the other two bent their heads while the Bishop chanted: "Hail to the secret weapon of Titipu, the sword!"





READIN' and WRITHIN'

Book Reviews by Damon Knight

WILSON TUCKER'S "Time Bomb" (Rinehart, \$2.75), I'm afraid, is still another novel written on only two cylinders of the author's quiet, ironic, cheerful mind: the brilliant intensity that produced "The Long Loud Silence" is still there, indubitably, but not working.

The story, slack as an old clothesline, meanders from one unemphatic set of characters to another, never quite managing to pull them all together into a sense-making pattern. Although there are intriguing novelties among Tucker's time-travel gimmicks, it's impossible to believe in them for long, because he hasn't followed out their logical implications. Shirley and Gilbert Nash (of "The Time Masters"), reappearing here, are like well-bred people who wake up in the wrong house. The villain, a U.S. Senator named Ben, never appears long enough on the stage for us to hate him; the real hero, a time-traveler

named Theodore, is only a nostalgic shadow.

And yet, except for its shallowness and lack of visualization, this novel might have been a moving work, even if not a convincing one—like a good novel of intrigue, in reading which you willingly suspend your disbelief of certain improbable events, for the sake of the rich, darkly vivid story. The book is a slovenly job, but not loveless: Tucker, if ever he works at it, will be a novelist yet.

YOUR SINS AND MINE, by Taylor Caldwell. Gold Medal, 25¢.

Miss Caldwell's second venture into our field covers a little more territory than her first. In "The Devil's Advocate," American businessmen, journalists, educators and a goodish list of others were stood up in a row, like naughty schoolchildren, and told off for having elected a Democratic president. In

this one, the catastrophe is even more impressive: the Earth refuses to give forth its fruits; and this time, all of us are to blame.

The theme is terrifying enough, and in other hands might have made a notable book. But Miss Caldwell's ideas, like her characters, are as formless as dough: the tragedy of this story is three-quarters invisible behind a comedy of errors.

And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled. for these things must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places. But all these things are the beginning of travail... And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold. But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.

This interpolated passage from *Matthew* (xxiv., 6-8, 12-13) is the basis for Miss Caldwell's apocalyptic story. One dry spring, the fruit trees fail to blossom; the corn does not sprout, the wheat dies. Cattle grow lean; thistles invade the fields. In the farming community of Arbourville, the Narrator's father (who "was what used to be called a 'fundamentalist'") quotes *Matthew* to anybody who will hold still, but everybody else prefers a rosy Rotarian view. Newspapers, grange officials, heads of governments all keep up the fiction that the drought and famine are tem-

porary, and local. As the year wears on, God's patience with this obtuseness wears thin. New weeds of an almost Martian virulence appear. There is a plague, and a world-wide earthquake. The Almighty invents a scorpion but nastier, to sting His children. "Local condition, ha-ha," says everybody but the narrator's pa. "Get better soon, yes sir. You bet. Got to keep smiling, boy. Keep that old chin up, shoulder to the wheel!"

As stockpiled food begins to give out, the local farmers band together to protect their seed corn and ration themselves. A native Communist agitator shows up, unaccountably talking like a Nazi out of a 1940 novel, but is quickly suppressed; and so forth, and so on. Miss Caldwell's explanation for all this is as follows:

The land hated us, the violated land, the faithful land, the exploited and gentle land. The land had decided that we must die, and all innocent living things with us. The land had cursed us. Our wars and our hatred—these had finally sickened the wise earth.

Now, the curious thing about this is that it is not in the least biblical. Fundamentalist old farmer George appears to have forgotten that the events mentioned in *Matthew* xxiv. are to be forerunners of the second coming of Christ (an event, and for that matter a name, not referred to in this book). The author's alternative explanation—

not Christian nor even patrist—in-
vokes the ancient goddess variously
worshipped as Demeter, Ceres, &c.
—the "earth mother" aspect of the
Triple Goddess. But on Christmas
Eve, the Milky Way flows together
into the shape of a cross, following
the suggestion of *Matthew xxiv.*,
30: "*and then shall appear the sign
of the Son of man in heaven.*"
(How mortifying for the author if
it had been a crescent or a star of
David instead!)

At any rate, on p. 115 the narra-
tor discovers (having done it once
before, on p. 37, and then sat on
his hands for seven chapters) that
all you have to do is kneel and pray,
"Lord, be merciful to me, a sin-
ner," and the weeds in your im-
mediate vicinity will magically van-
ish, the earth be fertile again. This
seems like a small price to pay, and
accordingly everybody falls to. End
of sermon.

The moral is not obvious, except
that this country's unique theologi-
cal contribution is still a wholly
contemptible, watered down, dime-
store religiosity. The tragedy, I
suppose, is that Miss Caldwell is
perfectly sincere: this bird-bath full
of tepid tea really does plumb the
depths of religious experience for
her, and—evidently—for the "hun-
dreds" of "priests, rabbis and min-
isters" who are said to have written
her in praise of this work.

RAY BRADBURY'S "The Octo-
ber Country" (Ballantine,
\$3.50) consists of 14 stories from
his first, now rare, collection,

"Dark Carnival"—that is, about
half—plus five recent ones. Indis-
pensable to Bradbury collectors, it
includes such minor masterpieces of
horror as "The Small Assassin,"
and such warm, gentle witchcraft
as may be found in "Homecoming"
and "Uncle Einar."

A few of the stories have been
lightly revised, and much improved
stylistically; but for the most part
these are only face-liftings: the
opening paragraphs of "The Lake"
and "The Emissary," for instance,
have been completely rewritten,
but the rest is unchanged.

It's curious to look back now on
these first Bradbury stories and re-
flect how far they have brought
their author. Not many of them are
stories at all; most are intensely
realized fragments, padded out
with any handy straw. The sub-
stance of "The Next In Line," for
one especially vivid example, is in
a two-page description of some
Mexican mummies, as relentlessly
and embarrassingly horrible as any
tourist photograph. The remainder
—the two American visitors, the
car trouble, the hotel room, the
magazines—is not relevant, it mere-
ly plumps out the skeleton enough
to get it into a conventional suit of
clothes.

Many of the stories have sudden
surprise endings, often more than
a little awkward; for instance, "The
Emissary" is five lines too long.
"The Cistern" (so misnamed, ap-
parently, because you can't very
well publish a story titled "The
Sewer") has no substance beyond

the story Anna tells her sister; the subsequent action is patched on merely for the sake of action.

Why Bradbury's world-line and that of the animated cartoon have never intersected, I do not know; perhaps because the result would necessarily scare the American theater-going public out of its underpants; but clearly, in such stories as "Jack-In-The-Box," Bradbury is writing for no other medium. The gaudy colors and plush textures, the dream-swift or dream-slow motion, the sudden dartings into unsuspected depths of perspective, or, contrariwise, the ballooning of a face into the foreground—these are all distinctive techniques of the animated cartoon, and Bradbury uses them all. "Jack-In-the-Box" would serve, just as it stands (except for the usual disjointed ending) as a cartoon scenario. Disney Studios would never do this kind of thing, of course; but—if you will excuse me for the paradox—if they did, it would be perfectly typical. (And I, for one, would break down the doors to see it.)

Of the new stories, two, "The Watchful Poker Chip of H. Matisse" and "The Wonderful Death of Dudley Stone," are something altogether new from Bradbury: they are caricatures instead of cartoons. The protagonists of "Skeleton" and "The Crowd" are mechanically drawn John Citizens; but George Garvey and Dudley Stone are people.

PREFERRED RISK, by Edson McCann (Simon & Schuster,

\$2.75) is the vastly disappointing winner of the *Galaxy*-Simon & Schuster contest. Apparently it is tougher than anybody realized to find an unpublished novel which (a) is not committed to another book publisher, and (b) satisfies the requirements of a *Galaxy* serial. The mountain has been laboring since February, 1953, and here is your mouse.

To begin with, the story slavishly copies *Galaxy's* "Gravy Planet" ("The Space Merchants"), which has already been copied once by the original proprietors as *Galaxy's* "Gladiator-at-Law." The third, and I trust the last in this cooky-cutter series, substitutes medical-insurance companies for the advertising industry of #1, and the housing industry of #2; otherwise the tune is much the same, but the performance is very flat.

There is a tendency for the heroes of long *Galaxy* stories to be shmoes; I do not know why, although I have contributed to the trend myself; I suspect the editor likes them and sends out emanations to that effect. At any rate, the hero of "Gravy Planet" was a sharp apple, perfectly unscrupulous and entirely believable in his environment. It was later complained that this made his climactic conversion to the forces of light rather hard to swallow. Perhaps for this reason, the hero of "Gladiator-at-Law" is a social zero, neither bright nor dull, honest nor crooked, tall nor short: Mr. Who? This apparently worked well, as a character

like that can be converted to anything, twice a chapter if necessary without arousing any incredulity.

And for whatever reason, the hero of "Preferred Risk," a claims adjuster named Tom Wills, is a shmo to end all shmoes.

"I know for a fact," Gogarty said bitterly, "that Zorch knew we found out he was going to dive in front of the express tonight..."

"Mr. Gogarty," I interrupted, "are you trying to tell me this man *deliberately* maims himself for the accident insurance?" Gogarty nodded sourly. "Good heavens!" I cried, "that's disloyal!"

This will give you some idea. The whole front half of the book is like that: evidence parades across the middle ground in a steady stream that the Company is run by a bunch of corrupt no-goods and tyrants, &c., &c., and Wills stomps around through it all, with a regulation smile on his face, uttering platitudes. His only function in the novel, in fact, seems to be to demonstrate this essence of shmoness; he is totally unimportant to the plot.

Curiously, all three books hinge on the idea of inheritance of power. In "Gravy Planet," the protagonist, unknown to himself, turned out to be the heir apparent; this was a surprise. In "Preferred Risk," exactly the same thing happens:

He sighed. "I seem to have been wrong about you, Thomas. Perhaps because I needed someone to help, I overesti-

mated you. I thought long ago that under your conditioning you had brains."

This is incredible.

Only one character in the book has any vividness, and he briefly: Zorch, the "human jellyfish" whose ability to grow new limbs enables him to defraud the Company over and over. This throws an ingenious monkey wrench into the orderly actuarial world, and for the first couple of chapters the man is enormously believable and entertaining. Later he blurs into the general grayness, as if another hand had taken him over.

The extrapolation holds up brilliantly in some places, as in the anti-war and disease policies, with their unexpected concomitant, the suspended-animation chambers; in others, it's nonsense, as in the "transportation policies" ("*as the cab driver clipped my coupons . . .*"). The plot development is logical and ingenious, but uninspired.

And while we are on the subject, whatever happened to the winner of the big Shasta novel contest?

CITIZEN IN SPACE, by Robert Sheckley. Ballantine, 35¢.

Like the stories in Sheckley's "Untouched By Human Hands," most of these are brief, brightly inventive and logically unstable. Sheckley's faceless characters chirp, twitter, whirl with captivating grace around an idea, but seldom settle down long enough to exercise or-

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*Why couldn't these final men
depart from a dying Earth?*

THE LONELY ONE

by ROBERT SILVERBERG

(author of "The Dessicator")

illustrated by ORBAN

JANNES VERY carefully guided the two-man cruiser out through the *Haughtsmith's* loc^o, while Norb Kendon paced up and down in the tiny confines of the little ship, watching the red dot of light that was Sol.

"I feel kind of funny about this, Harl." Norb sneezed at the small hard point of red light. "I feel like a kid going where the grownups belong."

Jannes said nothing till the cruiser was in free fall; then he wheeled around to face the other. "So what if it's Earth? Those wild men down there can't be anything to get sentimental about. That's your trouble, Norb—sentiment.

You haven't learned, have you?"

Norb repressed a tiny beat of anger that rose suddenly within him. "You know I'm not being sentimental. It's just that—just that here's the planet that gave birth to life, the source of all mankind; and here it is dead or almost dead."

"And that's not being sentimental, eh? What do you call it, then?"

Norb frowned. "You win you long-nosed devil; I'm being sentimental. So what? Is it a crime? I just can't help feeling reverential right now."

"I'll lay off," Jannes said. A smile creased his face, and pulled his long, twisting snake of a nose into an even more grotesque shape.

THE CRUISER began to spiral down into its landing orbit. Jannes skilfully cut the orbit to minimum and sat the ship gently on its tail. He deactivated the pile, while Norb tested the atmosphere. "How is it, Norb?"

"What do you expect? Cold as hell, but breathable."

"How cold?"

"Plenty; five below, I hope the natives have some warm igloos for us."

"If we find natives, that is," Jannes rejoined. "We haven't heard a peep out of Earth



They sank to
their knees in snow.

for twenty years, and there were only a few hundred left then."

"We'll find them," Norb said. "Life doesn't give up so easily on this planet, me-thinks. Man'll stick pretty closely to his home world."

"Sentiment again," Jannes snorted, as they snapped open the lock and headed out.

THE SNOW was soft and unbroken, and the two spacemen sank into their hips. They floundered around in the drifts for a few moments.

"Hey," Jannes called shouting to make himself heard over the whistling wind. "We'd better clear a path in front of us, or we'll never get anywhere."

They fumbled out their blasters and began to melt a path through the snow. The warmth fanned out around them.

"Which way is that colony?" Norb asked.

"Mukennik said due east which is thataway. If it's a colony, that is; how anything could survive in this kind of territory is beyond me."

They pushed on through the snow, leaving a little river of warmth behind them. The day was dark with the perpetual gloom of a dying world, and the dwarfed sun

afforded little illumination and less heat. For as far as they could see, there was nothing but the shiny glint of the snow, broken occasionally by the few twisted, leafless trees which pierced the white blanket and stood out sharp against the grey skies.

"Are we headed east, Harl?"

"Don't you trust the compass?" Jannes asked. "It says we're going east. Not that it matters much."

"It's just that I don't see any sign of that colony. If Mukennik could see signs of life from the *Haughtsmith*, we ought to be able to find them from down here. And there's nothing in sight in any direction."

Jannes stared hard at the compass. "It says east is out that way; and we'll go that way. If we don't find anything, we'll turn back. Let Mukennik come down here and freeze for a while; I don't see why that green faced clown couldn't come looking for his own colonies, instead of sending us."

Norb looked quizzically at his companion. "Quit it, Harl. You know a Sirian couldn't stand this kind of climate, or else Mukennik would be down here without any coaxing. Besides, we volunteered."

"Yeah. I almost forgot that. didn't I?" Jannes wiped a

speck of snow from the end of his nose. "Let's look real hard, yes? Maybe bring back a live Earthman or two for Mukennik's collection."

NORB SAID nothing. He squinted out toward the horizon, hoping to catch the slow rising of smoke or some other token of life. Suddenly he stretched up on tiptoe. "You see that out there Harl? That look like a living thing to you?"

"Where? You mean that tree all the way out there?" Jannes pointed.

"Right direction, but it's not a tree; looks like a moving figure to me."

"I'll take your word for it. Say, is Mukennik serious about that offer?"

"I'm sure he is," said Norb straining hard to see the distant figure.

"He'll feel pretty foolish if we do find them. He'll have one hell of a time trying to fit them all aboard the *Haughtsmith*." Mentioning the ship reminded Jannes that he had descended from space in a ship, and he hastily turned to look for the cruiser. He was somewhat surprised to see that the trail they had blazed extended only a few hundred meters back to the ship.

"Look at that, Kendon; I

was sure we'd gone farther than that."

"Must be your mind snapping," Norb retorted. "Say, that is a figure out there!"

Jannes stared and agreed. They began to shout and run as fast as they could—which was not—very fast—through the snow toward the far-off shape.

THE OLD man had caught sight of them as they ran, and was standing in the snow, arms akimbo, waiting for them to approach. He was waiting by one of the gnarled trees, and, Norb observed, he was as gnarled himself as the twisted tree he leaned against. He was very old and terribly dried-out looking; Norb hoped he wasn't deaf.

"Greetings, Earthman," Norb said slowly and carefully once they were within speaking range. "We have come from skies in silver bird." Norb illustrated this with his hands, and Jannes followed Norb's lead.

"Do you understand us, old one?" Jannes asked, rolling each syllable out with care.

The wrinkled oldster smiled. "Of course I do, son. Why do you star-people insist on treating us like savages, anyway?" The old man's voice was husky and impossibly deep. "I've been

speaking this language for as long as the both of you've been alive."

The two spacemen looked at each other in surprise. "Sorry," Norb said, smiling. "It's just that Earth's been out of touch with the System for so many years that we didn't know exactly what to expect."

"Quite all right, believe me. Welcome to Earth. Where'd you say you were from, anyway?"

"Starship *Haughtsmith*, out of Vega II."

"Is Vega II a beautiful planet, young man?"

"That it is," Norb said. "Our winters are only a few degrees cooler than our summers, and the Climate Constant is one of the best in the galaxy."

"Interesting," the old man said.

"We'll be glad to get back there," Jannes replied. "No snow."

NORB HEARD a low rumbling coming from the earth. It grew steadily in intensity. "What's that?"

"Earthquake," the old man said. "Means Earth's annoyed at what you said about going back. She likes to keep her visitors around for a while."

"We'll be here a while," Jannes said; "and then we'll

clear out as fast as we can—if we're not frozen solid first."

The ground began to quiver and the two Vegans fell forward in the snow. The old Earthman remained upright calmly ripping up the bark of the tree with horny fingers and stuffing the pieces of bark into a sack as they came off.

"Guess you got her angry, all right. Come; I've got all the bark I need now, so let me take you to see the king before you get into some real trouble. My name's Calvin, by the way; I'm just about the oldest man on Earth, I guess. McNeil's been expecting you for years—ever since the transmitter broke down." Calvin gestured and led them off in a path through the snow.

SUDDENLY, the old man disappeared from sight. His voice boomed up from the ground below. "Keep moving; the entrance is right in front of you."

The two spacemen moved cautiously forward, Norb in the lead, and felt the ground beginning to slope. Abruptly the snow fell away and Norb saw there was a slanting hole in the ground. He entered.

Kalvin was standing there, with a knot of people around

him. Most of them were old, Norb noted, all thin and knotty-looking. There were a few children, not many.

"Welcome to the capital city of Earth," Calvin said, "the last survivors of the glory that was Terra salute you."

"Do you all live here?" Jannes asked.

"All hundred and two of us," replied Calvin, waving "You see before you the guardians of man's immortal heritage. That's what they told us when they left us behind." He laughed raucously.

A tall man appeared from somewhere in the back of the cavern. Like the others, he was warmly dressed in animal furs, and in his flowing white hair was a crown made of shining metal. As he approached the spacemen saw that he was very tall indeed.

"I'm McNeil," the tall man said. Norb looked him up and down and decided he was almost three meters tall from shining crown to fur-swathed feet—the tallest man he had ever seen. "Welcome to Earth," McNeil said. "I'm the king."

JANNES and Norb exchanged uncertain glances. The space-manual didn't say anything about proper behavior in front of kings. "We're

honored, Your Majesty," Norb began uncertainly. "We represent the Starship *Haughtsmith* out of Vega II."

"Just call me McNeil," the big man said. "Pleasure is all mine; I've been expecting visitors from space for twenty years—ever since our transmitter went off. Sorry we had to hide from you, but when I saw your ship up there I figured the best thing to do was to cover up all traces of our city till we knew whether it was safe or not. I think you saw us from up there before we had a chance to cover up, because you seemed to know where to land." McNeil turned to Calvin, who was standing nearby. "Hey, oldster, you've earned another."

The king took a strip of fur from his collar and put it around Calvin's neck, where, Norb observed, there already were a number of similar strips. Calvin smiled, bowed, and fingered the new fur strip pleasedly.

"Kalvin's our most honored knight," McNeil explained. "The old dog's lived so long he's been knighted ten times over. I was hoping the spacemen would eat you when you went out to get them, leather-face." He gave the old man a playful shove and Calvin backed slowly away.

"He said there were just a hundred and two of you," Norb said.

"That's right. There used to be more, but we're slowly dying out. This life isn't an easy one, and Earth seems to get colder every year. I won't give us more than another century, and then this'll be a dead planet. Come on, I'll show you a room you can have while you're here."

NORB AND Jannes followed the tall king down a winding corridor. Jannes was still too amazed to say very much, and followed along in silence.

"That's why we came," Norb said; "we weren't sure anyone was left on Earth or not. But now you won't have to fight the cold any more: we're going to take you back to Vega with us—all of you—and you can spend the rest of your lives in warmth."

"I'm afraid it's too late for that," said McNeil; better forget the idea. Here's your room. The people will be putting on a dance for you tonight, and we'll come get you when it's time." The king showed them a small room carved out of the side of the cavern, bowed, and vanished into the corridor.

"I guess you were right," Jannes said, as soon as they were alone.

Norb smiled at the smaller man. "I guess so, Longnose. It's wonderful to find the home of civilization again. Isn't it? When we get them back to Vega, we can give them a whole village and make it into a living museum to preserve the ways of dead Earth. Mukennik'll really be delighted by this."

"Somehow I don't like it though," said Jannes. "First, Calvin telling us to watch out, and now McNeil saying it's too late for them to leave. I smell trouble cooking."

"My father warned me to watch out for people with long noses," Norb said. "They find trouble where there's none to be found."

"Have it your own way, Kendon. You're so thrilled to be on Earth that you can't see beyond the end of your nose—which isn't so small itself."

Norb settled back on his bed of straw and did not answer. It had been an exhausting walk through the snow and now was the time for some sleep.

IT SEEMED to be an instant later that there was a timid rap on the wall of their room. A girl tiptoed in and stood there. She was bundled in furs except for her pretty, somewhat dirty, high-cheek-boned face. About eighteen,

Norb judged, as he waited for her to master her fear.

"The dance is about to start, sirs," she whispered. "McNeil thinks you'll be interested." Having delivered her message, she turned quickly and dashed away into the corridor.

"We'd better go," Iannes said: "they're expecting us."

"Right." They wandered down the corridor toward where they heard the sound of drums.

All hundred and two inhabitants of Earth were gathered in the largest room of the underground village. They were massed in a compact group—except for McNeil, who stood in front, and two drummers, who sat at one side patiently pounding drums made of animal-skin.

"We're about ready to start," said McNeil. "We hold these dances regularly, but this is the first time we've had outsiders to watch. They're all very excited about it."

MCNEIL sat down at the side of the room, beckoning to the two Vegans to follow suit. "It's our only remaining art form to speak of. We had to discourage other forms of art because they weren't useful; but at least the people get some exercise out of this."

"What sort of a dance is it?"

"It's really a historical pageant. It dramatizes the history of Earth from its time of greatest strength to its old age. Which reminds me—are you still thinking of taking the Earthfolk off to Vega with you?"

"Yes," Norb said.

"Forget about it; we can't come. And don't try to get any of my younger men to come back with you. You'll be in for a surprise or two, I think."

"But why, McNeil? Here we offer you free transportation, and all the comforts of the universe on a warm planet, and you refuse. Do you really enjoy living in this frozen hole?"

"Whisper, please," said the king; "I don't want to alarm my subjects. No, of course we don't enjoy living here. But it isn't as bad as it seems: Earth's been freezing for thousands of years, and we're used to cold weather and nothing else; we've never known any other. But that's not the reason why we can't leave. You'll find out during the dance. I think they're ready to start."

THE DRUMMERS began to beat in a tricky syncopation, and the massed Earth-

men in the center of the room slowly began to move. They were interweaving in intricate patterns, moving faster and faster, winding around one another in snakelike rhythms.

"That represents Earth as it used to be," said McNeil; "the crowded home of mankind."

Norb and Jannes watched as the motion became more and more rapid, the Earthmen entangling themselves in complex patterns and then patterns still more complex.

Suddenly there was a terrible pounding on the drums, and one of the dancers burst from the twisting multitude and ran toward an empty corner of the room.

"First interplanetary voyage," McNeil whispered.

The rest of the dancers continued to move in a close-packed mass. Then, another drumroll and a second dancer detached himself and headed for another corner of the room. "The second," McNeil said.

Now the dancers ran in more dizzy patterns than before, and a third and fourth ran off to corners. The drumbeats grew more frenzied.

"Here comes the exodus," said McNeil. "The big push outward that left Earth almost deserted."

The drummers practically went wild, as one after another of the dancers pranced out from the center and headed for one corner or another, until there were more dancers in the clusters in the corners of the room than in the center. Those in the center began to move more slowly now, as their numbers diminished.

Only about ten Earthmen were still in the center of the room, out of the original ninety-nine. They continued to weave through their patterns, but more and more slowly. One dancer finally pulled himself free and ran to the most distant corner. Another followed. Then another.

FINALLY, there were just three left in the center, revolving slowly around each other. Their movements grew more and more tortured, and they writhed as if their feet were glued to the floor. Slowly they sank to the cold floor and stayed there, their bodies still wriggling. They stretched out flat on the ground, moving now a finger now a toe, but seemingly unable to rise. One by one they stopped moving completely, until the last one let his head drop.

That was the signal for a

wild demonstration by all the dancers. They began shouting and singing, and the three in the middle leaped up and joined them. The dance was over.

Norb and Jannes sat transfixed. "That's our last art form," said McNeil. "What did you think of it?"

"It's wonderful," Norb said, suddenly jarred back to reality. "But I didn't quite catch the symbolism at the end. Why didn't the last three run off to join the others on the other planets?"

"I thought it would be obvious," McNeil said: "but perhaps it's just that I've seen the dance so many times. Look: they would have left but they couldn't; the planet wouldn't let them."

"What's that?" said Jannes in surprise.

"Earth is a very lonely world, Vegans. She's not getting much heat from her sun any more, and she knows she's dying. And she doesn't want to die alone. Just about all of her people have left her, but she's clinging with all her might to her last hundred-and-two. It's been centuries since any Earthman's been allowed to get off-planet. Earth doesn't want us to leave, and she's holding us in a tight grip."

"Don't give us that, Mc-

Neil," said Jannes angrily. "I know you think that we regard you as savages, but that doesn't mean you have to play along. There's some other reason why you don't want to leave. Don't start spouting mythology at me. We know—"

JANNES suddenly spilled to the floor. The ground gave a convulsive shudder.

"Earthquake," McNeil said calmly. "It's pretty common now, every time the Earth gets angry—and I suppose you made her angry. I think you'd better get back to your ship before there's worse trouble. Calvin, you'd better guide them to their ship."

"Wait. Before you let us go, we want to speak to our commander and find out what he thinks."

"What he thinks can't possibly concern us," McNeil said; "but go ahead if it'll please you."

Jannes began to set up the radio equipment. It was fairly simple work for an experienced pilot like Jannes; but for some reason, his hands shook and it took longer than usual. He dialed in the *Haughtsmith*, and Mukenik's familiar voice crackled down to them.

"How's it going?" the commander asked. "We watched

you go into that hole with the Earthman; what's been happening?"

"You'd better do the talking," Jannes whispered to Norb. Norb replaced him at the controls of the set.

"Trouble, chief," Norb said. "We found the Earthmen all right—a hundred and two of them—and they say they're the whole population of the planet."

"Healthy?"

"Healthier than we are. It's about five below down here and I guess that keeps them in shape."

"Are they savages?"

NORB LOOKED around. A knot of curious Earthmen had gathered around the transmitter and were watching closely. "No, Mukennik. But they're—well, not quite civilized either." Norb heard a snort of protest from McNeil.

"What do you mean? Have you asked them to leave Earth?"

"Yes," Norb said. "I told them all about Vega, but they're not going to come."

"Not coming? Why?"

"We spoke to the king here. and he tells us there's an Earth-spirit which is lonely and dying, and won't let them leave. He seems to say they'd like to get to a warm-

er planet, but they're stuck here for good."

"Oh," Mukennik said. He was obviously disappointed. "So they won't come at all."

"No."

There was silence from the *Haughtsmith* for a moment. "Well, don't try to force them," Mukennik said, finally. "It doesn't pay to meddle with tribal customs. Might as well give it up as a bad job and come back; we'll do up a report on it and let it go at that. At least we've found the legendary Earthmen."

"Yes," Norb said. "At least we've found them. Well we're going to head for our ship now; get the airlock ready to receive us."

THE TREK across the snow to where the gleaming two-man ship stood upright was a long and slow one. Calvin accompanied them—the old man was seemingly tireless—and stared with apparent amazement at the ship.

Norb and Jannes began to climb the catwalk to the entrance of the cruiser. Calvin stood below, watching.

"So long, old man," Norb said.

"So long," Jannes echoed; "we'll remember you on Vega. It's nice and warm there, you know. An old chap like you

could live forever in that warm climate."

"I know," boomed Kalvin. "But I belong here. Farewell Longnose. Farewell, Square-head."

"Farewell, Kalvin," Norb said, a little miffed at the nickname.

"Don't rush about blasting off," said Kalvin. "I want to be clear of the ship before you do. . . . If you do, that is." The old man emitted a series of deep chuckles from the back of his throat and wandered off in the snow, heading toward his people.

Norb watched him retreat. "Well, that's that. They're funny people, these Earthmen; the cold has made them strong and—and sort of noble."

"You're still sentimental," Jannes said. "Take a last look before we blast off."

Norb stared out the port at the flickering red sun which so soon would be dark. Jannes reached for the firing stud.

"Hey!"

NORB TURNED and saw Jannes straining to touch the firing stud; his arm was not fully unbent at the elbow. "Something's wrong; I can't straighten my arm. You better come over here and push the stud for me."

Norb hurried over to the

control board. "I'm not too sure how it works."

"Nothing to it," said Jannes, grimacing from the sharp pain in his arm. "Just reach out and push the stud."

Norb extended his arm. It did not reach the stud. "I can't do it."

He looked at Jannes with growing horror. "I can't touch the stud."

"Go ahead," Jannes urged. "Just push it." The pilot continued to rub his bent arm, trying to straighten it out.

Beads of perspiration broke out on Norb's forehead. He tried to push his hand forward to meet the stud. "It's as if there's a wall around it," Norb said. "I can't get to it." He tried again and then sat down in a rage of frustration.

Jannes reached out with his good arm. "I can't do it either." He looked at Norb. Norb looked at him.

"You know what I think?" Jannes demanded, quietly.

Norb nodded. "I think so too." He made another attempt to push the stud, and failed.

Norb stared out at the reflection of the red sun along the snow. Jannes watched him silently.

"But it's crazy," he finally burst out. "You don't believe that story about the Earth-spirit, do you?"

"I'm the sentimental one, remember, Jannes?"

"This is no time for bickering. Why can't we touch that stud?"

NORB SAID slowly "They believe in the Earth-spirit. Maybe the Earthfolk hypnotised us during that dance, and left a post-hypnotic command not to go near the firing stud. There's no physical reason why we can't touch it."

"Can we un-hypnotise ourselves?" Jannes joined Norb at the port and looked out over the snow.

"I'm just guessing that that's what they did. That whatever happened, they did it. But for all I *know*, it's the Earth herself that won't let us go."

"But that's crazy!" Jannes shouted. He leaped to the board and tried to press the stud. He made no contact. "It must be hypnotism," he said. "I can put my arm out, but when I reach the stud I draw back; I just can't bring myself to touch it."

"Maybe if you keep your hand there, and I back up into you, and accidentally nudge your hand into the stud—"

"It's worth a try," Jannes said. He put his finger as close to the gleaming stud as

he could, and waited. Norb casually sauntered up behind him, whistling, and suddenly pushed.

Jannes screamed and held up his finger. "It's no use: there might just as well be a wall around that stud."

Norb frowned. "Look out the port," he said pointing. "Under that tree."

Kalvin was sitting cross-legged in the snow, about a hundred meters from the ship, watching and waiting.

"They know exactly what's going on in here," Jannes said. "I'll bet he's roaring with laughter."

SAVAGELY he grabbed a length of pipe from the tool-cabinet and brought it down on the firing stud.

The ship stayed on the ground.

The stud broke off.

"Now you've done it," Norb said. "How do you plan to get up now? Do you know anything about repairing the starting mechanism?"

"Not much, but we don't have to bother; I'm going to call Mukennik and have them come down and pick us up."

"Suppose *they* get stuck here, too?"

"At least we're no worse off, and we'll have company."

"That's not a very good attitude, Harl; but I suppose

I'm being sentimental again."

"Shut up," Jannes was dialing in the *Haughtsmith*.

"I thought you were coming back up," said Mukennik immediately. "We're waiting for you."

"We're stuck. We can't get the ship up."

"What's the trouble? Mechanical difficulties?" Mukennik sighed. "Or won't the Earth-spirit let you go?"

"We've broken the firing-stud."

"Use the auxiliary; it's under the rear cover."

They looked. It was. They failed to make contact.

"We can't touch it," Norb said. "I think the Earthmen left us with a posthypnotic command against blasting off."

Jannes looked out the port. "Kalvin's still there. Why don't we get him in here and get him to push the stud for us?"

"That's out," said Mukennik; "we'd only have to return him afterward."

"What do we do?" Jannes demanded.

"Hold on a while. I'm going to send down the other ship to get you out of this you idiots."

IN A SHORT while, the second cruiser stood on its tail in the snow not far from the first. Norb saw that Kalvin

was watching with evident interest as the rescue-cruiser came down.

Two well-clad spacemen came dashing down the catwalk and toward Norb and Jannes. "Hurry up," one of them said. "Mukennik doesn't want to waste any more time than necessary. Kinnear's going to take you two up in our ship, and I'll bring yours in alone."

Norb and Jannes headed back to the second ship with Kinnear. Kalvin stood up under his tree and yawned loudly.

Kinnear tried to push the stud; he failed.

"Are we all crazy?" he demanded.

"It looks as if it's contagious," Norb said. He glanced through the port. "Doesn't seem as if Bartle's gotten very far with our ship, ei-

Kalvin was wandering in slow circles in the snow.

"Is there any way out of this?" Kinnear asked. "Let's call Mukennik and ask him to bring the *Haughtsmith* down for us."

"You don't think he's going to risk getting stranded here himself, do you?"

"He can't leave four men here."

"You don't know Mukennik, then," Norb waved to Kalvin, who was still outside.

The old man approached and stood outside the ship.

"WHAT'S the trouble, spacemen? I thought you'd be gone long before."

"We can't blast off," Norb said.

"Oh? Motor trouble?"

"No. You know what it is?"

Kalvin smiled. "We'll welcome you at our little village; it isn't often that we get new blood."

"Isn't there any way out?"

"The earth is a lonely planet," Calvin said. "It wants all the company it can get."

Norb looked back toward the control room. Jannes was talking into the transmitter and Mukennik's voice crackled faintly through the air.

"What's happening?"

"They won't come," Jannes said. "He's awarding us all medals and leaving us behind."

"Leaving us behind? Why?"

"He wants to get out of the atmosphere fast. He's afraid this Earth-spirit will get him to bring the *Haughtsmith* down here, and that would never do. You know how Mukennik hates cold weather."

Norb felt an icy chill growing inside him.

"THAT'S TOO bad," Calvin said. "It would have

been nice to have the big ship down here, too. We all could have lived in that instead of our cave."

"Yeah, too bad. I'm really sorry for you," Jannes said.

Bartle came trotting over from the other ship. They explained what had happened.

They looked up. The giant silvery form of the *Haughtsmith* was still circling in its orbit around the Earth. Norb turned and went back into the ship.

"They're starting to move," Jannes called from outside.

"Come on back in," Norb yelled. "One last try." They all crowded into the little ship except Calvin. The old Earthman stood by the side of the ship.

Norb reached for the stud and made no contact.

"That's it," he said. "Let's go. Hope you like cold weather, fellow Earthmen."

They climbed silently down the catwalk and Calvin led them through the path in the snow toward the little village of Earthmen. There would be all the time in the world to find the answers. But right now, the air seemed warmer and softer, as if Earth was happy, now that there were a hundred and six to comfort her dying days.



INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

Reports and Reminiscences
by Robert A. Madle

ONE OF *Our Planets May Be Missing*: Away back in 1936 a very adolescent Robert A. Madle took the highly-educated, and many-degreed, editor of *Amazing Stories* to task for permitting an author to state there were eight planets in our solar system. In his reply, Dr. T. O'Connor Sloane said, "The editor is not sure whether Pluto is really a major planet." Now, twenty years later, the good Doctor's conservatism may prove to be rather farseeing—for it has been announced by one of the world's leading astronomers, Dr. Gerard P. Kuiper, that there are only eight planets in the solar system.

Dr. Kuiper claims that Pluto (only 1/30th the mass of earth) is only a moon of Neptune which broke away millions of years ago, and that Pluto's eccentric orbit actually goes partially into Neptune's. If Dr. Kuiper's observations are

accepted, then Pluto, with us as a planet since 1930, will be sorely missed.

News and Views: Several science fiction celebrities were mentioned recently in Walter Winchell's column. Modest Walter had a few words to say about Richard Wilson's "The Girls From Planet 5" (Ballantine, 35¢), and he also looked in on Chet Whitehorn (who edited the ill-fated *Vortex Science Fiction* two years back) romancing an actress in the Village... Fred Pohl and Cyril Kornbluth have collaborated on a non-s-f novel, "A Town is Drowning," based on their actual experiences during Hurricane Diane. Ballantine has published it....

"The Search for Bridey Murphy," by Morey Bernstein (Doubleday, \$3.75), suggests that the hyponosis and ESP sensation seems to be the biggest thing since L. Ron Hubbard's "Dianetics."

Already on the bestseller lists of many localities, Paramount has announced their intention of filming it.... Exclusive Films have signed MacDonald Carey to star in an s-f film "X—the Unknown".... We've all read of the ghastly murder of five missionaries by native tribesmen. Now the news is out that Gordon Scott, while working on "Tarzan and the Lost Safari," hired a Mau Mau as his chauffeur (unbeknownst to Mr. Scott). A plot to kill Scott was fortunately nipped in the bud.... Here are the titles of some forthcoming s-f films: "Creature From the Green Hell," "The Shrinking Man," "The Mole Men," "The Electric Man," "The Deadly Mantis," and "The Man Who Could Not Die."

NEW YORK *World Convention Moves Into High Gear*: David A. Kyle, Chairman of the 14th World Science Fiction Convention, recently announced the appointment of Larry Shaw (editor of *Infinity Science Fiction*) as Publications Director for the affair. Prominent writer Richard Wilson will head-up the publicity department, and Sam Moskowitz will assume his customary role of auctioneer. Ron and Cindy Smith (editors of leading fanzine, *Inside*) will edit the periodic Progress Reports; Lin Carter, who has shown himself to be a perfectionist with the various amateur magazines he has edited, will compile the program booklet.

Arthur C. Clarke will be on hand as Guest of Honor, and he will be flanked by just about all the editors, artists, and writers imaginable. Annual Achievement Awards (the "Hugo") will again be presented to those voted the most deserving by the members of the Convention Committee. The Convention will be held in the Hotel Biltmore, September 1, 2, and 3. Get your \$2 membership fee off to Box 272, Radio City Station, New York 19, New York today!

THE FIRST SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE

ON THE occasion of magazine science fiction's thirtieth anniversary, we thought it might be appropriate (and respectful) to devote a little space to the first issue of the first science fiction magazine. So here we go—three decades into the past.

"A New Sort of Magazine." So read the title of Hugo Gernsback's editorial in the first issue of *Amazing Stories*, dated April, 1926. Editor Gernsback (today known as "The Father of Modern Science Fiction") explained that *Amazing* was not just another *fiction* magazine to be displayed with the scores of periodicals then in existence. No, *Amazing* would prove itself to be "a pioneer in the field"—the first magazine of "Scientifiction."

Certain contemporary connoisseurs maintain that *Amazing Stor-*

ies was preceded by both Harold Hersey's *Thrill Book* (published 16 issues in 1919) and Farnsworth Wright's *Weird Tales* (commenced in 1923). In reality neither of these publications can be termed "scientification" magazines, although both featured this type of story rather extensively. In addition to the afore-mentioned magazines, many others, such as *Argosy*, *All-Story*, *Blue Book*, and *Science and Invention*, printed the type of story that has come to be known as "science fiction." But it was left to Hugo Gernsback to publish the first 100%, out-and-out science fiction magazine.

The first *Amazing* was much different in format from that publication of today. It was published in the large, 8½" x 11" format, consisting of 96 pages. The price was 25¢ which, in the days of Calvin Coolidge, was quite a tab for a fiction periodical. Frank R. Paul's astronomical-type cover depicted a strange sequence showing a dozen ice-skaters flitting about. Behind them could be seen two boats, each perched somewhat precariously upon a mountain of ice, while a large planet Saturn filled a yellow sky. The cover proudly advertised in large red letters, "Stories by H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, Edgar Allen Poe."

THE STORY Paul's cover illustrated was "Off on A Comet," by Jules Verne. Originally written in 1877, this is one of Verne's

lesser-known works, and possibly his most fantastic. The first half of the novel appeared this issue and told of a sudden convulsion of the earth followed by such inexplicable occurrences as the sunrising in the west, the day being only 12 hours in duration, and people being able to leap thirty feet into the air. The explanation, only hinted at in the first installment, involved a comet approaching so near to the earth that an entire portion of the planet was snatched up by the gravitational pull of the comet and deposited thereon. Scientifically impossible in itself, this "gimmick" was utilized by Verne to relate a scientifically-accurate trip about the solar system. Verne, as usual, had the novel well-laden with "characters," in the colloquial sense of the word. And despite the fact that "Off On A Comet" was written almost eighty years ago, it still makes very pleasant reading.

H. G. Wells' offering was one of his comparatively unknown shorts, "The New Accelerator," which told of an invention of a drug which enabled one to move so fast that everything in relation to him appeared to be motionless. Old hat, you say? Yes, it is—now; but it was strikingly original when Wells penned the yarn.

Edgar Allen Poe was represented with "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," a tale of a mesmeristic experiment which kept a dead man seemingly alive. A short story featured this time, which stands

up admirably under the onslaught of time, was G. Peyton Wertenbacker's "The Man from the Atom." A story which forcibly depicts the so-called "sense of wonder," we again had an invention—this time one which enabled the protagonist to increase in size to such an extent that he became larger than the universe itself. Eventually he found himself upon a strange planet of super-beings—lost, perhaps forever, from Earth.

This, then, was the first *Amazing Stories*. Replete with strange adventures and unusual concepts, the first issue of the first s-f magazine stands up very well after thirty years.

FROM THE FAN PRESS

P EON (20¢ per copy from Charles Lee Riddle, 108 Dunham Street, Norwich, Connecticut). The issue we are looking at now is #36, so *Peon* has been around a long time. Riddle has been around long enough to have built up a fine group of regular columnists. Thus Terry Carr, in his department, "Fantastuff," makes bright remarks apropos the science fiction scene. And Jim Harmon's "Harmony" seems to go on forever; we think it has been with *Peon* from the beginning. Ted Watkins also has a discerning department which is a combination of science fiction and science fact.

But there is a lot more to *Peon* than just departments. (*Peon* is a

pretty hefty magazine, averaging thirty large pages per issue.) Robert W. Lowndes (who edits sports and western magazines in his spare time) has an article on "Bias In Criticism." Inspired by Dr. E. E. Smith's recent Clevelation speech (in which the Dr. statistically demonstrated which book reviewers were biased, and which were not) Editor Lowndes maintains that reviewers *should* be biased. However, we believe that Dr. Smith was using "bias" in a manner other than that used by Lowndes; our interpretation of "bias" as used by Smith means "prejudice".

There are several short stories by Lin Carter and Dave Mason. This magazine rates very high on our recommended list.

Eclipse (10¢ a copy from Ray Thompson, 410 South 4th Street, Norfolk, Nebraska). This is one of the biggest dime's worth around today. Ray has been publishing *Eclipse* for several years now, and, of late, it has improved considerably. Formerly suffering from a bad case of illegibility, Ray has now gotten his mimeographing straightened out.

Issue #14 contains 32 pages, including a long editorial, many pages of fanzine reviews, a like number of pages of letters from readers, and an important message from W. Deeck, who, quote by quote, suggests that the author of "Beowulf" had s-f f a n d o m in mind when writing his classic. We

don't think you can go wrong by sampling this one.

Transuranic (10¢ from Al Alexander, Apt. 8, 2216 Croydon Road, Charlotte, N. C.). This dittoed magazine started out as a bi-weekly news-sheet covering the activities of the Carolina Science Fiction Society. It has developed into a general fanzine, one which shows promise of continued improvement. Editor Alexander (a science teacher by profession) writes and edits in a light and humorous manner, and there is a definite atmosphere about the mag-

azine. The current issue features an analysis of the science fiction heroine, and how the female type actually *will* fit into future society. Randy Warman is the author. A message from the President of the Carolina S-F Society, fanzine reviews, and letters fill out the issue. Try this one for, as Alexander states, "*Transuranic* tastes good like a magazine should."

Fanzines for review should be sent to Robert A. Madle, 1620 Anderson Street, Charlotte, N. C.



READIN' and WRITHIN'

(continued from page 107)

dinary intelligence upon it. At its worst, the stupidity of Sheckleymen is so astonishing, it completely overshadows the marvels the author is expecting you to gawp at. Thus, in "Hands Off," two interstellar burglars (did you trip? sorry!) take 17 gory pages to discover—what every reader knew on page 1—that a spaceship built for the comfort of aliens is not likely to work very well for people.

Bar this one failing, however, Sheckley's is one of the most promising new talents in many years. He has a unique touch with a wacky civilization, a clean, compact style,

and a satirical wit that is dry without being bitter. Some of these stories, particularly the later ones, show traces of characterization as well. My favorites are "The Mountain Without a Name"—which, incidentally, neatly disposes of the theme of "Your Sins and Mine" in about one-eighth the space—; "The Accountant," a mad little story about a family of warlocks which has spawned an obstinately impractical son; "Hunting Problem" with its tentacled Boy Scouts; and the wry "The Luckiest Man In the World." D.K.





THE LAST WORD



RADICAL CHANGE

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

As long as a magazine goes along as usual, I'm not tempted to write in to the editor, but if it changes radically—either for better or worse—I feel forced to write in and say something. Usually, it turns out to be a screeching complaint that the magazine in question is losing its grip and going to the well-known bow-wows.

Happily, that's not the case with *Science Fiction Stories*. Quite the contrary. Since its post-war revival, *Science Fiction Stories* has been good. Now, in just the past three issues, it has become a 'top-rater'. The new format, the new logo, the new type of covers have put it right up near the top as far as appearance goes. As far as contents—articles, stories, et cetera—are concerned, it ranks well above *Galaxy*, and right next to *Astounding*.

The January '56 issue is a case in point. James Blish's "Giants In The Earth" is real, honest-to-God science fiction. That's the kind of story I like to read, and can so rarely find.

De Mille's "The Last Chance" was more of an essay than a story,

but what's wrong with essays? Especially if they're that good.

The Runyonesque "Instigators" by R. E. Banks, while not technical, is nevertheless fun to read. Very enjoyable.

Smith and Harmon both came out very well, too. They tied for last place in this issue, but they would very likely have come out first if some of your competitors had published the stories.

Now we come to the poetry department. Very few S-F magazines have published verse of any kind. *Weird Tales* used to run a few morbid, Gothic things that bored me stiff, and the *Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* has put out a few short, very humorous pieces—one of which was Randall Garrett's Gilbert & Sullivan pastiche, "I've Got A Little List".

But yours is the first magazine to devote four whole pages to such thoroughly delightful stuff as Garrett's "Demolished Man". Another Lowndes "first", and, I think, a definite pacemaker.

Naturally, Damon Knight's book reviews constitute a definite *must* for any reader of science fiction; they're quite often a great deal more fun to read than the books. I

damn near died of laughter reading his review of Jerry Sohl's "Point Ultimate", having made the unfortunate mistake of buying the book before I read the review. Next time, I'll know better.

In other words, as you can see, I thoroughly enjoyed the whole issue (and the two preceeding it) so much that I felt it was time to bubble over and tell you about it.

As for future issues, why don't you try to get more by Randall Garrett and get your hands on writers like Isaac Asimov and Robert Heinlein?

Still, you're doing so well I hardly see how you could do better. But try it; anyway.

JOSEPH RUSSO,
El Paso, Texas

Garrett, we have with us this time; Asimov was here in the May issue. Garrett is also in issue #29 of Future Science Fiction. Can't promise Heinlein, but I'll try!

BROKEN JINX?

Dear RWL:

For a time, it seemed that I was a jinx to science-fiction, but the bigger *Science Fiction Stories* has cured me of the belief. Let me explain: I've read *Astounding Science Fiction* and *Galaxy* for about two years, but distribution in my area made it almost impossible for me to secure copies of the many other

magazines. However, in the last six or eight months, the situation has changed, and most of the remaining mags can now be obtained.

I began to buy them freely, without realizing that I only got one issue of a mag, and then never saw that title again. Via *Fantasy-Times* and some of the bigger fanzines, I learned that these magazines were going out of business, or finding the publishing business very rough. It all tied in with my big sfsprece; one issue of *Planet* and it folded; two *Spaceways* and it suspended; three *Startling* and poof!; three *Imagination*, and Hamling bi-monthly; two *If* and that mag does the same; one *Beyond* and it goes annual; etc.

Of course it's all coincidence, with me catching the mags just as they're on their last legs, but still...well, this makes my fourth SFS, and you're still going strong, even adding pages. Thanks, you've restored a little of my self-confidence.

Rating the stories for your January release, I come out with this result: 1) "Giants In The Earth" by James Blish; 2) "The Instigators" by Raymond E. Banks; 3) "Stranger" by Jim Harmon; 4) "Shrine Of Hate" by George Hudson Smith; and 5) "The Last Chance" by Richard DeMille.

The Blish novel is without a doubt the best thing I've seen by that author since the end of the famous "Okie" series; it deals with

a new branch of mutants, and doesn't run over the same beaten telepathy-ESP path that has been done so many times.

Ray Banks' becomes better with each succeeding story, and may soon establish himself as another Sheckley or Budrys if he keeps at it. This is another very original concept, and is quite well written.

Jim Harmon, another young writer who shows great potential, seems firmly attached to the short-short, but handles them well leaving no room for complaint. "Stranger" is his best since *Spaceways'* demise.

The other two are both above average, but fail to rate higher because of the unusually stiff competition. This shows the quality of the entire issue.

Your new 144 page total puts you on a par with *Galaxy* with respect to size, but I'm inclined to believe that your publication is, as of present, better than that of Mr. Gold. Go monthly, perhaps run a serial or two, all the while keeping up the standards of your mag. and it'll be impossible to keep you out of the big three. That is, if the Curtis jinx doesn't hit you first!

KENN CURTIS.

Cincinnati, Ohio

Hmm, if I were superstitious, I'd be worried. And I can tell you a coincidence of my own—three well-known oldtime fiction and/or fantasy authors died within two

weeks after I either first met them or first received a letter from them.

APPLAUSE FOR de CAMP

Dear Sir:

I enjoyed reading L. Sprague de Camp's article, "Faery Lands Forlorn" very much. I wouldn't mind at all if you published more of his articles on the same subject. Since I am somewhat familiar with the Bible, I believe he might be interested in my comments on his article, where it touched upon biblical subjects.

He said that myths usually weren't written, and he grouped Moses in the myth category. According to the Bible, Moses wrote his own myth in "The Book of the Law of Moses". This book was later divided, as a matter of convenience, into five smaller books with the names: *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*, Moses having written *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy* from personal experience. *Genesis* was compiled by Moses from earlier written documents as is evidenced by colophons appearing at *Genesis* 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11: 10, 27; 25: 12, 19; 36: 1, 9 and 37: 2. These colophons begin with, "This is the history of..." and testify as to the authorship or ownership of the preceding account, with the obvious exception of the first colophon. Moses did his writing in the 15th century BC, and archaeological

findings show that writing was known close to 1500 years earlier.

When picking a flaw in the theory that world-wide flood legends indicated a world-wide flood, de Camp neglected to mention the most obvious one. An Eskimo flood legend would indicate that the Eskimo's ancestor (according to the Bible, Noah or Noe) survived the flood, either worldwide or local, that killed the rest of mankind. I prefer to believe in the world-wide flood, since the Bible has proved to have no inaccuracies.

I don't know the internal evidence de Camp had in mind when he said that *Genesis* was written later than 1014 BC. The first biblical writer, Moses, as I have already stated, compiled *Genesis* in the 15th century BC from earlier written documents. According to these documents, the flood occurred around 2370 BC. I believe Mr. de Camp subscribes to a theory, that I am familiar with, that smacks slightly of hemipygian characteristics.

The Bible gives an explanation of the flood that has always impressed me. Immediately after the flood, Jehovah concluded a covenant with Noah giving the rainbow as a sign. Whenever Jehovah concluded a covenant, He always gave a spectacular sign to identify the covenant's Author. This is shown by the signs of Mount Hor-eb accompanying the Law Covenant, and the signs at Pentecost accompanying the Christian cov-

nant. Therefore in all probability the rainbow sign was spectacular.

Continuing as to why the rainbow was spectacular: In the second creative day Jehovah separated the waters into two groups; those on the earth (seas) and those in the air (a cloud canopy surrounding the earth). *Genesis*: 2:5,6 states that no rain fell before man's creation; but a mist watered the ground. The first rain mentioned in the Bible was at flood time and, necessarily, the first rainbow was the one seen by Noah. Hence its spectacularity. Along the same line, the Sun and Moon were first mentioned by name after the flood. Before the flood they were simply called lights.

A cloud canopy over the earth would keep surface temperature uniformly warm throughout the earth. At one time in the earth's history this was so; witness the coalfields in the Antarctic. The flood was probably caused by the condensation of this canopy, according to the Bible sometime in November. This loss of this canopy would mean a rapid cooling of the earth, especially in the northern hemisphere. Such a rapid cooling did take place at one time, as is shown by the carcasses of mammoths in Siberia preserved intact by a quick freeze.

The biblical explanation of the flood has always impressed me, because it was not an explanation in the true sense; rather the explanation was hidden in the incidental

information. I don't believe Moses knew enough about physics to venture an explanation, and by Moses' time the rainbow was commonplace.

Two more items before I close. First, most bible translations tell of Noah's floating in the Ark for 150 days, instead of 150 years. Second, the better bible translations state that the flood waters were 15 cubits higher than the highest mountain, instead of rising 15 cubits to cover the highest mountain.

JOHN HARPER,
Maple Shade, New Jersey

You have to remember that the ancient Hebrews (and many other peoples) did not look upon authorship, and the by-line credit of authorship, the way we do. A scribe saw neither harm nor deceit in attributing his inspirations, on chronologies, etc., to Moses, or any other great figure, when he wrote them down; nor would his readers have found any fault with his having done so, had they known.

Many people believe today that the Bible, while true, is not all of a piece as respects the various orders of truth; that the revelations were not intended to tell the full story at the time, and were told in such a manner as would be understandable to the peoples who heard them—thus the evolutionary nature of revelation from the earlier to the later books. Obvious-

ly, the people for whom the original Mosaic Law was intended were not ready for the teachings of Jesus—and it can be argued that not very many are ready even today.



BLESSINGS

Dear Sir:

You've gained a new reader. I bought my first issue of SFS yesterday, read it and re-read, it and I'm looking forward to the next.

I'd read the James Blish story somewhere (book? anthology?) and was a little disappointed to find it wasn't a new one. Authors, I remember; titles, no—so let's blame my mnemonic shortcomings for my disappointment.

Damon Knight's reviews are fun. Particularly well received here, because his knife is dull and tempered with compassion.

"The Instigators" was a bit too Runyonesque.

And bless you for "Stranger", which proves that adult reading need not necessarily violate good taste. I get so-o-o-o tired of the family type magazines where the double entendre is the sin supreme and all stories are peopled by adolescents and/or (for lack of evidence to the contrary) neuter adults.

I'm not feminist, just bewildered. I've never met another female science fiction fan, and would feel a little less "alien" if you'd prove their existence by a few letters.

(Mrs. Thomas)

MARY DZIECHOWSKI

I'm sorry that you didn't realize you'd read the Blish story before; I tried to guard against disappointing readers thus by: (1) taking the "All Stories New" lettering off the front cover. (By error, it was left off the frontcover of the March issue, too, although all stories therein were new, to the best of my knowledge and belief.) (2) By placing the notice FIRST MAGAZINE PUBLICATION in a prominent position of page 6 of the January issue. (3) By noting the original title and copyright notice in the indicia of the contents page. (I changed the title, not for the purpose of trying to attract fans who had read the story before, but because it was felt that "Beanstalk" was not too meaningful a title.) About six people told me,

or wrote in, that they had read the story before, but only two out of the six objected.

The story first appeared in an anthology, which had small sale and has been out of print for some time; this manner of reprint is not a regular "policy" with us, but we may—if there is no objection when the story is clearly presented as such—offer a short novel of this nature once in a while. I thought "Beanstalk" an outstandingly fine story, and further reprints—if any—would have to hit me as hard; and I would have to be satisfied that the book version both had a small circulation and had been unavailable for a reasonable length of time.

If any reader bought the January issue, unaware of the situation, and found that he had read the Blish novel before, I will gladly send him a free copy of the forthcoming issue of Science Fiction Stories, or Future Science Fiction in recompense, upon notification. I believe that few science fictionists would take unfair advantage of such an offer, which is why I'm willing to make it—just as we had no desire to cheat any reader when we published "Giants in the Earth".

There are, indeed, female fans—but the reason why you haven't seen many letters from them in this department is because they haven't written, not because these columns are for males only.

YEOMAN WORK

Dear RWL:

It isn't your fault that I was disappointed when I read the letter section this time, because, you see, I'd expected to find some letters praising Charles De Vet's fine story, "Female of the Species", which appeared in your November issue. But since no one else took the trouble, I guess I'll have to do the yeoman work myself.

I've read numerous other tales by him, but they were all the same in that they were all suspense-action stories which, though fair enough, could just have well been written for straight adventure magazines. This is the first story of his that I'd say was really *science fiction*—the first I've read, anyway.

I thought surely that someone would comment on that delightfully ambiguous ending, "*He took her in his arms, and . . .*" I suppose most readers took it as sex triumphant, and that's possible enough, since Karol did affect his desire strongly enough. But I don't think that's what happened at all. I think he took her in his arms and killed her, the way he'd killed the piranya bird. That's even more believable from what we saw of the hero's attitudes and behavior.

It isn't often that a "Lady or the Tiger?" ending is really apt for a story, but I think this was one of the right times and I'm glad the editor didn't insist that the author spell it out. Personally, I don't

want to *know*; it's much more fun being able to argue it the way I see it and feel that, since he didn't tell us explicitly, I read between the lines correctly and saw what the author really meant.

Anyone want to argue?

CLARENCE OBERLIN,
Bronx, New York

Moral: don't depend on other readers to make your point for you; write that letter yourself!

INFORMATION ON CHRISTOPHER

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

If Mr. Schellenberg did not read "Balance" in *Future*, as you suggested in your editorial note, perhaps he ran across the story in Bleiler and Dikty's 1952 anthology.

British books in which John Christopher's works have appeared are: "No Place Like Earth", John Carnell, editor, 1954, Grayson and Grayson Ltd. The first section (from which the book gets its title) contains "Colonial", "The Prophet", "Breaking Point", "Decoy", and "The Trees"—all of which are Max Larkin stories. "The Year of the Comet", John Christopher, 1955, Michael Joseph. This is a full-length novel, also using the "managerial" theme, but without the character, Max Larkin. It is the first of the Clemence Dane edited series, Novels of

Tomorrow, now being issued by Joseph.

Mr. Christopher's works have also, of course, appeared in British periodicals. The hard cover books mentioned can be obtained from Capt. K. F. Slater, 22 Broad Street, Syston, Leics, England.

DIRCE ARCHER,
Pittsburgh, Penna.

PERSPECTIVE

Sir:

Credentials first: I am an S.F. reader of vintage "*Amazing* '26."

Now to your "Pedagogical Question".

To begin, the present era of scientific actuality puts me into the category of the dreamer awakened, and delighted. Certainly I still read science fiction; but it has powerful rivals for my money in George Gamow, Fred Hoyle, Lincoln Barnett—to name three expounders of the "factual" frontier. In short, science fact is a strong contender against science fiction. Though it may be tougher to chew on it has, personally, stronger adventuresome appeal.

So what you term a "pedagogical question" may also be a "dollars and cents" one.

To concretize in a slightly different—pictorial—medium: I can get a bigger kick out of contemplating the Hayden-Planetarium's ten-foot-square photograph of the spiral nebula in Andromeda than I can out of a full science fiction novelet. The story may be excit-

ing, but the picture gives me a sense of wonder.

And so with Fred Hoyle's notion of the continuous creation of matter to replenish the "core" of the expanding universe. I read that a week ago and I'm still ten feet off the ground from it.

Correction. There's one recent science fiction story that stopped the clock for a week or two: that was Arthur C. Clarke's "Childhood's End". There was a "reaching out" quality in it—a speculative vastness. Perhaps the key was its ego gratification. In contrast "1984" was a nothing story—half-baked Aldous Huxley. (Don't get me wrong: Huxley was an excellent writer of his time).

But—pulling the threads together—I see science fiction as an important facet in the mosaic of modern humanism; when it comes near the level of "Childhood's End". It is a medium for space-time perspective: the gateway to a sense of security, of a feeling of rational capacity—to orient to the notion of boundless human powers in a boundless cosmos.

How do ya like them apples!

So you might say I'm an idealist—of the "old school" or such.

But—pedagogical shmedagogical—either in the stories or in articles, science fiction magazines are up against *Scientific American* now—for me, at least. Where I used to buy science fiction magazines regularly, I now buy them occasionally.

After all, what fan isn't interested in all the dope on the projected earth satellite program that he can lay his hands on?

W. J. FRANKLIN
New York, N. Y.

Giving perspective to human behavior and aspirations, etc., is one of the functions of literature; the great works are those which include interpretations of the past and/or of the author's "present", and great works of criticism reinterpret from the viewpoint of a later "present". Sometimes, for example, a 19th Century criticism of Shakespeare can tell us more about aspects of 19th Century feeling than an essay on the times, written during the time; similarly, a present-day analysis, which includes examination of last century's viewpoints, can help point up the differences in outlook that have arisen.

I hope to live to read late 20th century analysis of some of the early and mid-century works in science fiction.

Viewpoints are part of human behavior; what a great work of present-day science fiction may tell us about space-time is less important for any scientific fact it may include than what meanings formulations of space-time—both those legitimately drawn from what is considered as known, and those drawn from extrapolation—have for us.

FUTILE?

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I believe I feel about as strongly concerning science fiction fandom as does Ron Frazier (see "The Last Word," March '56 issue), and certainly dislike Lewis Barrow's blue-nosed comments just as much as Ron, but when I read Mr. Barrow's letter originally, I was not moved to write a burning tirade against him because I have seen his type before, and know that such a move does no good. A person like Barrow appears in print almost periodically, quietly damning fans, fandom, conventions, and so forth; I have had the misfortune to meet some of these people in person, and have found from experience that nothing short of torture threats will make them change their opinions. You can give them facts, relate to them the many authors, editors, artists, and even publishers who worked their way up through the channels of fandom; you can point out that writers and editors, who make their living in the science fiction business, value the fans' comments highly; you can shake a fist under their noses and scream in their faces.

All of this, however, is futile. The Barrow-type person (who can be recognized on the street by the distasteful expression on his face and his nose perpendicular to the sidewalk, pointing up) will merely step politely aside and continue

through life with a picture of fans as kids in beanies and carrying water pistols—juveniles, who revel in wild antics because they've been disowned by their parents. Although this may sometimes be true, I am sure that if Barrow would take the time to look around fandom a little, he'd find that the majority of Bnfs (big name fans, for the uninitiated) are mature adults in private life, and hold responsible jobs. But as I said before, Barrow-type will not look around, and even the most biting letter will fail to penetrate his impervious shell. So, Ron, let's you and I have as much fun in fandom as we please, and leave Barrow-type to his ignorant misconceptions. Perhaps someday, he'll find himself staying in a Convention hotel with fans all around him . . . punishment to fit the crime!

The March issue is another fine effort. Cliff Simak's short story is the most moving thing he's ever written and would compare favorably with Sturgeon or Bradbury at their respective peaks. Sam Moskowitz: here is my idea of "a sense of wonder" in modern science fiction—not a trite bit of stuff about superhuman men and busty women leaping from one star to another, but a sensitive, emotional portrayal in words that spreads a picture in your mind's eye almost as real as a photograph. This is unquestionably Simak's best since the astounding "City" series.

Milton Lesser's novel is one of his better efforts, and Randall Garrett is just as hilarious as ever. The other stories range from fair to good. By Ghod, if any science fiction magazine deserves a monthly status now, it's yours. Can't you do something about a more frequent appearance?

KENT MOOMAW,
Cincinnati, Ohio

NOT FUTILE

Dear Mr. Lowndes

Thanks for sending on some of the recent letters. A couple of specific replies may be in order, and then perhaps we can get on to more important matters for discussion. Or, should I say, less overworked, since I gather—both from Mr. Moomaw and Mr. Gordon—that the subject has been thrashed out quite thoroughly a number of times before.

If I have read Mr. Moomaw's comments accurately, he objects to the same elements in "fandom" that I do; his contention is that, while these elements exist, they do not constitute the entirety, or even a majority, of fandom and fan activities. I haven't had occasion to check this for myself, but I'm perfectly willing to accept the proposition; it is a legitimate one in itself, and one which could be applied to any group considered as a group.

Let us therefore smoke the pipe of peace; I'm all for the kind of

"fandom" that Mr. Moomaw seems to represent, if his letter is to be taken as a symptom. And I suppose that the "kids in beanies, etc." (a very fine capsule summary of what irritated me so much, some years back that it remained with me as a prime association with the term "fandom") can't be eliminated, however much, the respectable element would like to be disassociated from them.

Let me quote from Mr. Gordon's letter. He says, "...if your only impression of 'fandom' was derived from the Sergeant Saturn type of thing, no one could blame you for your feelings, however mistaken they are in relation to the whole picture."

Agreed. And I don't mind in the least being shown an error in my outlook, when it softens unpleasant experience. Should I ever attend a Convention now, I'll make allowances for any of the "beanie activities" that I might encounter.

LEWIS BARROW

Which goes to show, I think, that however many times the subject may have been raised in the past, there's no harm in letting it come up again, once in awhile. Do you readers agree that a conversion of feeling in the case of someone like Mr. Barrow is worth the temporary toe-treading that expression of his former opinions may have effected?

ARTISTS NEED CRITICS

Dear Bob:

There are editorials, and there are Editorials. Your latest, *Nothing If Not Personal*, falls easily into the upper-case E bracket. In any field of art, criticism, honestly and intelligently done, is not only useful, but necessary. There are, of course, certain "critics" who have given the word "criticise" its present meaning of "saying something nasty", and these we will always have with us. But the intelligent critic, who can not only see what is wrong with a work, but what is *right* with it, is one of the artist's most valuable assets.

Damon Knight is just such a critic; I have an enormous respect for the man. Although I've yet to write a novel, I have a personal letter from him in which he alternately runs hot and cold over a novelette of mine. When I first read it, there were spots where I disagreed violently.

"What the hell does he mean: 'lack of characterization'?" I asked between clenched teeth.

So I got out the story in question and re-read it, checking over the letter at the same time. It taught me an awful lot about my own writing.

Science-fiction is a field with entirely too few competent critics. Plenty of reviewers, but few critics. I can get a review of the book by glancing at the dust jacket, and I suspect a good many reviewers do

the same. (In fact, I know of one case where that actually happened to a certain S-F magazine—and the reviewer was summarily fired. In case somebody might leap to an erroneous confusion, the magazine was NOT *Galaxy*.)

Even critical reviews of someone else's work can be of help to the artist. He can compare his own judgement with that of the critic and see how the two balance out. That's the way we learn things, kiddies; using judgement.

Someone once remarked that "a competent critic is like a precious jewel." But I'd like to point out

that, unlike a jewel, he does not derive his value from his rarity, although good critics are, to be sure, damned rare.

RANDALL GARRETT

To be of any use, a critic must know and love the field in which he operates, but that love cannot be infatuation. One difficulty is that most who have essayed science fiction criticism have either been infatuated with the medium (and thus blind to serious faults) or contemptuous of it (and thus blind to its strengths).

R.W.L.



NOTICE TAKEN

(continued from page 1)

However, the traditional critic used them unsystematically and only occasionally.

Hyman lists such things as psychoanalytic associations, and the application of semantic translations as examples of non-literary techniques, while the non-literary bodies of knowledge range through the physical and social sciences. "And all of these," he states, "result in a kind of close reading and detailed attention to the text that can only be understood on the analogy of microscopic analysis."

THIS DOES not mean that modern critics have abandoned the traditional practice of inquiring into the author's intentions in a

given work, what the intentions might be worth, how well he achieved his aim, and what are the meanings and worth of the finished job. But before the modern critic comes to these questions, he investigates the meaning of the work in relation to the artist himself.

What, for example, is the relation between "At The Mountains of Madness" and Lovecraft's childhood; his family relations throughout his life; his personal ambitions and needs; his friends and associates; his professional career; his social environment and his attitude toward it; his personal philosophy at that time and before? What particular, personal needs drove him to choose a horror theme for this

story, and what was the relation between this choice and his choice for themes of earlier stories? What needs did he fulfill in writing this story and what needs is it likely to fulfill in most readers? *How* did this creation satisfy the author's requirements; how will it satisfy the readers', and what are the relations between the two functions?

What are Lovecraft's images, situations, key words and phrases, types of ambiguity, avoidances, etc., and which of them are characteristic with him? How do they relate to archetypes, to the body of the literature in his field, to the body of contemporary literature, to western literature in general? What are the relations to the philosophy of the times, to philosophies of other times? How much of the story is meaningful statement, and what kind of meaningful statement? How much of the story's assertions are provable, and what is the proportion of provable statement to non-provable statement? Are the proportions of meaningful and provable statement in this work characteristic with the author?

THESE ARE the kinds of questions that the modern critic explores, and his method of approach to them may be entirely his own, may follow those of another critic or critics, or may be a mixture of the two. But the result, depending upon the individual critic's ability and insight, can and should be a kind of illumination that was not found in the traditional approach to criticism. The reader can obtain

insights that may be valuable in respect to a wide variety of literature, far beyond the range of the author and work under examination; and it does not matter whether all the connections the critic makes are valid, all his conclusions sound. That is, a critic using the modern approach, can perform valuable service even in a study which contains provable errors of fact about the author, or doubtful opinions on the relationships between the author's inner adjustments and balances, and the characteristic manner in which these found expression in his work. The service, you see, is twofold; illuminations upon a particular author and general illumination on the subject of why one man writes, why he writes the way he does, and how this way can have what kind of meaning for other people.

MR. HYMAN also notes that there are two assumptions fundamental to traditional criticism which modern criticism ignores completely—that literature is "essentially a type of moral instruction, and that it is essentially a type of entertainment or amusement".

They key word in this quotation is "essentially"; modern criticism assumes (among other things) that although a given work may *contain* moral instruction, or may *provide* entertainment or amusement to a given reader—and although a given author may have set out with the *conscious intent* of moralizing,

entertainment, amusing, etc.—these conscious intentions do not form the essence of his work. The essences lie within the subconscious, which we know to be a complex of all types of experience in balance with personality and character traits; and it is this complex which dictates the author's choices all down the line. And it is the individual reader's complex which determines whether this reader will be drawn to a particular author's work (as well as a particular field within which he works) and what he will derive from a particular author or work.

Studies and experiments in the various fields of semantics (both "small s" semantics and "large S" Semantics—General Semantics—the former being mainly concerned with language and words and the ways in which human beings respond to them; the latter being concerned with languages of human response in general, not confined to the oral and the written, etc.) have shown that, among

other things, each one of us is unique in the way we respond to specific words, phrases, etc., and that our degree of flexibility varies according to the total circumstances. The *similarities* are what make it possible for us to communicate with each other at all, and a dictionary will give us a list of more or less generally agreed upon "meanings" for specific words and phrases within various periods of time. An understanding of semantic principles can assist us in being aware of the *limitations* of dictionary meanings, and show where and how rigid responses block and distort communication.

MODERN criticism is concerned both with the question, what did the author say? and what did the author probably mean? Traditional criticism is capable of handling the first question to a certain extent, but modern methods are needed in order to illuminate meaning—both what do the words probably mean?, and what did the

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words probably mean to the author?, which are different questions.

Now this may seem to put the color of determinism upon the literature and reduce authors to mechanical recording instruments. The danger of rigid, mechanistic interpretation is present—but does not necessarily follow if the critic himself is not something of an automaton himself, rigidly applying formulae which he has decided to be the ten easy answers to everything. We've seen deterministic theories spring up in many fields, from religion to physics to politics to economics, and whatever else you want to name; but events have overthrown deterministic theories, and the doctrine of Free Will (within various kinds of limitations) still remains the most fruitful basis on which to understand and predict human behaviour. (Literature is a kind of behaviour.)

The question arises whether commercial writing isn't beyond the range of interest of modern criticism. The answer is, not necessarily—although most modern critics rightly feel that they have more important matters to attend to first. The point, however, is not whether a given critic may want to examine the field, but whether the field is accessible to this kind of examination in the first place.

Obviously, it is; the question of *why* any particular form of fiction is popular at a given time, and to what extent, and what it says and does for whom, has a great deal to

do with the shaping and fate of serious literature.

THE TWO types, although usually distinct, may blend. Commercial fiction is mostly fiction written to suit the needs of a particular editor, or group of editors, publishers, etc., within a popular fiction category. The writer who sets out to make a living thus, voluntarily restricts himself; that is, he accepts—in *advance*—certain arbitrary limitations on his subject matter, or plots, or backgrounds, or types of characters, etc. (The phrase "in advance" is important, as there is a great deal of difference between an author's consenting to revise a work along "policy" lines for the purpose of getting it published, and his binding himself by policy before he starts.) I say "arbitrary limitations", because policies vary from publisher to publisher, and the restrictions may not be simply those which would make the difference between a work's being *mailable*—or *saleable*, so far as the consumer is concerned. We are not concerned at this point whether such limitations are sound, or are good business, but rather that they exist. The commercial writer—by definition—knows of them and tailors his product accordingly, as well as he can.

For, from the viewpoint of criticism, both traditional and modern, the all-important consideration is what the author *had* to say, what he was compelled by his inner drives to express; and why

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he *had* to say this, rather than something else; and how he expressed it. Accepting the restrictions of formula, particularly in the case of popular magazines, is akin to narrowing the tonal range and decreasing the orchestration; the *matter* will come forth in any event, and the methods of modern criticism can unearth this matter even in the small scale of western and sports stories.

SCIENCE FICTION may be less restricted in some aspects than other popular forms, but for the most part it has been and is restricted nonetheless—particularly in the magazine field. (Book publishers, too, are likely to keep a careful eye upon what the prospective cash customers want, and may reasonably be expected to buy in large enough quantities over a short period of time.)

But, as I have noted before, the worthwhile critic, while aware of the necessities of the marketplace, neither accepts them nor considers them an excuse for the writer under examination.

Now the fact is that serious work has been and can be accomplished within the limitations of commercial fiction, for the serious writer is not to be thought of as a longhaired something pouring out his soul in language too precious to be tainted by money. Quite the reverse; the biggest "hits" in literature were usually good sellers in their own time; and they made a hit because the author had an instinctive grasp of how to express himself in such a way as to have a wide appeal. Most of the "formulae" derive from things the great writers actually did. Thus, the question is not, did the author write with a specific editor (magazine or book) and a check in mind, but did his product come from within—or just off the top of the mind? Did he express his feelings, or did he suppress them, or dilute them, for the sake of conformity?

What can be suppressed in this respect is not the most basic feelings themselves, but rather that kind of elaboration and proliferation of them which make for richness in expression. It is this which

is found in work that is worth the critic's serious attention.

"Does science fiction contain this richness? I suspect that, as a field, it does—even though not many individual works are worth close analysis by themselves. It is the field as a whole which would most naturally elicit the attention of modern criticism, before much scrutiny is given to individual stories and authors.

AND this, if you please, is exactly what those who have claimed science fiction has become mature are saying, whether they are aware of it or not. Thus, the fact that Mandel and Fingesten decided that science fiction *was* worth serious attention is of far more importance to us than the question as to whether their angle of approach was the most desirable one to take, or whether they did a good job.

For there is no *one* "correct" angle of approach that the modern critic takes. His task, in addition to illuminating his subject, is to develop methods of procedure that other, and future, critics may use to better advantage. In a sense, then, he is moving in a scientific direction, as Hyman points out—even though criticism is not a science, nor can it ever be a science. If it were a science, then any dolt could get the same results that John Doe did, providing only that he is capable of following John Doe's method. In reality, three different critics using the same methods—assuming all three to be skilled and

understanding—could be expected to get widely different results from examination of the same works and the same authors. And all three analysis would be valuable.

The critic must be *something* of an artist, something of a poet himself in order to perform his function. The best traditional criticism cannot be called light reading, and worthwhile modern criticism isn't easy reading, either. It isn't something that you would ordinarily read before deciding whether you wanted to buy a new book.

And those who feel that science fiction must be defended at all costs, must be "boosted", and that the standards of traditional criticism—let alone modern criticism—do not apply to it (because science fiction is "different") are very likely to be outraged by serious examinations on the part of both the traditional and modern critics. The *meaning* of stories about spaceflight may bear some relationship to the fact that spaceflight is being attempted in reality; but there are deeper and more important meanings beneath this, which criticism can reveal—and which those who need to be protected from serious examination of science fiction do not want to be told about.

The rest of us may or may not agree with all or any of the findings in the Mandel/Fingesten article, "The Myth of Science Fiction", but may share my feelings of pleasure that this notice was taken. And hope to see more. R.W.L.



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